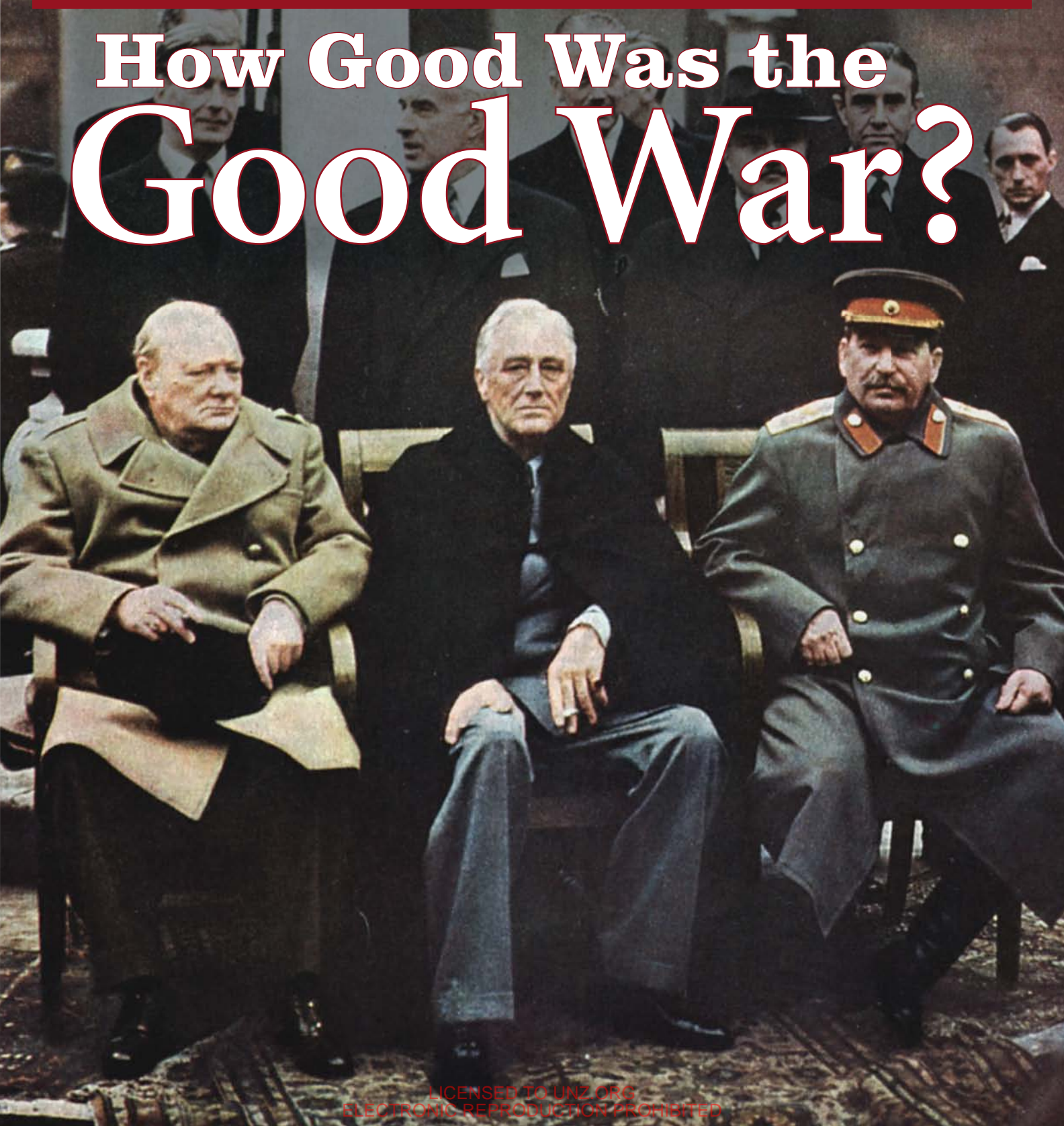


JULY 14, 2008

The American Conservative

How Good Was the Good War?



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Contents

July 14, 2008 / Vol. 7, No. 14



GETTY HULTON

[SYMPOSIUM]

How Good Was the Good War?

TAC contributors debate the lessons of World War II and their relevance to American foreign policy today.

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 6 Scott McConnell | 11 Christopher Layne |
| 7 Thomas E. Woods Jr. | 13 Ted Galen Carpenter |
| 9 Andrew J. Bacevich | 14 Michael Vlahos |
| 10 Stuart Reid | |

[JUSTICE]

Their Day in Court

BY WILLIAM ZIEGLER The Supreme Court ruling that granted Guantanamo detainees habeas corpus was a bad decision but a necessary one.

Page 17

[POLITICS]

The Last Rockefeller

BY MICHAEL BRENDAN DOUGHERTY Moderates like Rep. Chris Shays are a dying breed in the Northeast. Can the GOP rebuild a majority without them?

Page 22

COLUMNS

16 Patrick J. Buchanan: Israel Dares Us to Attack Iran

21 Daniel Larison: Barr's Southern Strategy

35 Fred Reed: The Sacred Grove

NEWS & VIEWS

4 Fourteen Days: D.C. Gets Its Gun; When Peace Is a Tragedy; Chris Cannon Fired

19 Deep Background: Hezbollah's Hit List; Terror Goes Local

ARTICLES

25 W. James Antle III: The Constitution Party's Chuck Baldwin gives conservatives a choice in November.

27 Nicholas von Hoffman: The Washington elite turned mourning Tim Russert into a celebration of themselves.

ARTS & LETTERS

29 Steve Sailer: Pixar's otherworldly "Wall-E"

30 Geoffery Wheatcroft: *The Post-American World* by Fareed Zakaria

31 Steve Sailer: *Who's Your City?: How the Creative Economy Is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life* by Richard Florida

33 Abigail Palmer: Of Verse and Vinum

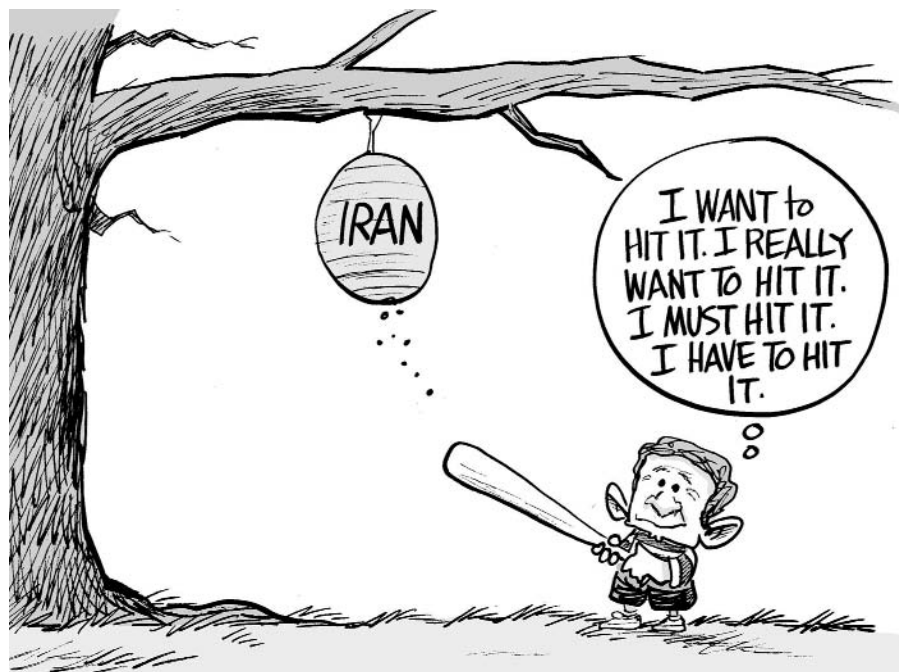
[RIGHTS]

CLINGING TO THEIR GUNS

The Supreme Court's *Boumediene* decision gave us a strange new respect for the four-and-a-half (counting Kennedy) liberal justices, for reasons that William Ziegler's essay this issue explains. The court's June 26 decision in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, however, reminds us why we need men like Scalia and Alito on the bench.

The majority—Thomas, Alito, Roberts, Kennedy, and Scalia—upheld the 2nd Amendment as enshrining an individual right that government shall not infringe. In a sign of how political terrain has shifted in the past decade, both John McCain and Barack Obama hailed the decision. "I have always believed that the Second Amendment protects the right of individuals to bear arms," Obama said, assuring voters that "As president, I will uphold the constitutional rights of law-abiding gun owners, hunters, and sportsmen"—though in the next breath he touted the need for "closing the gun show loophole" and "improving our background check system." The Democrats have not given up on gun control. But Obama knows how many votes the issue cost Al Gore in working-class America.

As the Democratic nominee's words suggest, *Heller* does not do away with impediments to individual firearms ownership—not by a long shot. "Despite the decision's enormous symbolic significance, it was far from clear that it actually posed much of a threat to the most common gun regulations," the *New York Times* reported, quoting Justice Scalia's majority opinion saying that nothing in the ruling "should be taken to cast doubt on ... laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms." Harvard Law School professor Mark Tushnet underscored the point: "the Court's opinion says that many existing regulations are 'presumptively



MARSHALL RAMSEY CISCARTOONS

constitutional,' and ... the Court declines to say what standard of review should be applied in determining constitutionality." That means more litigation before Americans can exercise their right to keep and bear arms with the freedom the Founders intended.

[DIPLOMACY]

PROTESTING PEACE

After news broke that North Korea had delivered an overdue declaration detailing its nuclear activities, the headline of John Bolton's *Wall Street Journal* reaction pronounced "The Tragic End of Bush's North Korea Policy." Surely he is disappointed that AEI's legion isn't off to work its liberation magic on another member of the Axis of Evil. But the rest of us are breathing a sigh of relief. What's so tragic about not starting another war to disarm or democratize or whatever we claim children will throw flowers for this time?

Granted, North Korea's declaration is probably as genuine as Kim Jong Il's pompadour. Not all pledges have been met. Verification is very much incomplete. And blowing up the cooling tower at the aging Yongbyong reactor was little more than pleasant theater. They did something symbolic and so did we: we initiated a process to take them off a list.

Contra the neocon howling, this doesn't mean the terrorists win. Military options are still "on the table"—as the

Bushies regularly remind us. And the U.S. can certainly continue to use every coercive weapon in the diplomatic arsenal—however unavailable they may be to Bolton, who previously growled, "I don't do carrots."

He pouts, "it is hard to see what remains of President Bush's doctrine that those who support terrorists will be treated as terrorists." Precisely. The administration is learning the hard way that every rogue isn't our worst enemy, that every cesspool isn't in our backyard, and that invasion isn't the best way to manage proliferation. There's nothing tragic about that.

[IMMIGRATION]

IT'S THE AMNESTY, STUPID

After disappointing races for anti-amnesty Republicans in 2006, pundits told us that voters don't mind open borders. The *Wall Street Journal* opined, "Like trade protectionism, the immigration issue is the fool's gold of American politics. Voters like to sound off to pollsters about immigrants, yet they pull the lever with other matters foremost in mind." The *Journal* ignored the fact that these conservative stalwarts were usually defeated by Democrats who also ran as border hawks. They ignored Arizonans who overwhelmingly passed four get-tough initiatives to crack down on illegal immigration. How will they ignore the sound of a Cannon exploding?

In Utah's Republican primary elections, incumbent Chris Cannon, a devoted supporter of amnesty, was ousted by Jason Chaffetz, a conservative who promised to restore law to the border. Cannon had proclaimed, "We love immigrants in Utah. And we don't oftentimes make the distinction between legal and illegal." He sponsored amnesty bills in the House. He received the endorsements of Sen. Orrin Hatch and President Bush. He spent seven times as much as Chaffetz did in the campaign. But voters gave a stunning 20-point victory to the newcomer who could "make the distinction between legal and illegal."

In 2006, voters were rejecting Republicans, not border security. Cannon's misfire should be a warning to the improbable GOP nominee, John McCain. Don't believe the *Journal*: amnesty is still a loser.

[POLITICS]

NATIONALIZE THE GOP

The *Politico* reports that the National Republican Campaign Committee has a bold new strategy for House GOP candidates: don't run as "traditional Republicans." In a PowerPoint presentation to the Party's House leaders, NRCC chairman Tom Cole pinned blame for recent Republican defeats in Illinois, Louisiana, and Mississippi on candidates who failed to distinguish "themselves and their local brand in contrast to the negative perception of the GOP."

"Nationalizing these elections as a choice between a traditional Republican and a traditional Democrat did not work in this political environment," Cole continued, "Democrats ran candidates that were a reflection of their districts."

That much is common sense, as Michael Brendan Dougherty's article in this issue on moderate Republican Chris Shays—the only kind who can win in Connecticut—shows. But the traditional Republican brand had long been

popular throughout the South and in Denny Hastert's Illinois district. The GOP candidates in those special elections, though flawed, were not poor fits for their areas—Republicans didn't run Shays in Mississippi's 1st Congressional District.

Running localized campaigns with good local candidates is not enough as long as the overall brand keeps pulling the Party down. The fix must be national. That means cleaning out the Augean stables of the Republican Party and finding new leadership untainted by the sins of Bush—the kind of leadership that Tom Cole, and John McCain, cannot provide.

[WAR]

SURGE THE GLOBE

The Taliban in Afghanistan has been "decapitated," military sources told the press in early June. Air and ground operations in the southwestern Helmand province had eliminated key rebel strongholds.

It seems, however, that a headless insurgency is even more dangerous. In June, 45 Coalition soldiers, including 27 Americans, were killed in Afghanistan, more than any month since the invasion of 2001.

In the same period, 31 Western troops—29 of them American—lost their lives in Iraq. The Bush administration was quick to attribute the low Iraq death toll to the high troop levels of its surge strategy. But the relative stability there was spoilt by the increasing havoc in Afghanistan.

The Bush administration's simplistic solution for deteriorating conditions in Iraq was the surge. But with U.S. forces already stretched taut and overdeployed, an Afghan surge is out of the question. So what is Bush to do? Instead of looking for an exit from two wars already underway, he dreams of launching a third against Iran. ■

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How Good Was the Good War?

FOR MANY AMERICANS, World War II remains the Great Crusade. For George W. Bush, John McCain, and legions of Churchill-worshipping neoconservatives, it is that and more: they take from the war—especially the war against Hitler—“lessons” that must inform current American statecraft. Patrick Buchanan disagrees. In *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War*, a book critically reviewed for *TAC* by historian John Lukacs, he depicts the war as an avoidable disaster and object lesson in what not to do.

Revisionism is the lifeblood of history. Facts may not change, but with the passage of time perspective can. Perhaps the moment is ripe for Americans to take a fresh look at World War II, one that might revolve around the following questions:

Do the war’s canonical lessons, such as Munich, retain their instructive power, or does the war offer other lessons of greater relevance? Does Churchill provide a model of statesmanship useful for American presidents? What about the largely forgotten Pacific War? Are there other wars, for example, the Great War of 1914-18 in which Churchill also figured prominently, that might offer more when it comes to illuminating the present?

While it would be impossible to respond to all of these questions in a brief essay, we invited several *TAC* contributors to use them as guideposts in offering their own interpretations of the lessons of World War II.

Scott McConnell How could Americans not think of World War II as “the good war”? We were victors. Our cities weren’t burned, our towns not occupied, our civilians not starved or slaughtered. Our battlefield casualties, nearly a million killed and wounded, were the heaviest in American history but lighter than other major combatants’. In terms of military and economic power—not the sole measure but important in assessing world politics—the war’s outcome was overwhelmingly favorable to the United States.

But most victories carry the seeds of their own undoing: 1945 left America more prone to seek military solutions than the chastened and war-exhausted Europeans. And, of

course, the victory was partial. No one could claim that Hungary, Poland, or Czechoslovakia was liberated by the conflict, though as “captive nations” they were able to breathe and eventually played noble roles in the decomposition of communism. Today they have become part of a Western world in which human rights are enshrined and no one fears the knock on the door in the middle of the night.

This accomplishment should never be taken for granted. One needs to remember how the world appeared in the prewar ’30s, and indeed in the early postwar years, when the most plausible political trendline in the West pointed to a forced march toward some variant of Orwell’s dystopia.

Indeed, these deeper social and political trends, barely discussed in Pat Buchanan’s book, formed the psychological backdrop for the flawed diplomacy that preceded the war. By the late 1930s, the Western democracies were gripped by lassitude. While Britain and France had stumbled through the Depression, few believed their democracies were the wave of the future. The energy belonged to the totalitarian alternatives. Probably most intellectuals were Marxists, the lion’s share of them committed Stalinists—acolytes and propagandists for a murderous dictatorship that had starved millions of its own citizens though forced collectivization. This regime of the “necessary murder” was what many of the West’s *bien pensants* aspired to. For the rest, the virile alternative was fascism: order, modernism, trains on time, a vigorous and—to its admirers—poetic mass politics for anti-Marxists. By contrast, the bourgeois and social-democratic parties seemed exhausted. It is no surprise that occupied France saw the cream of its young writers dive into open collaboration.

Yet the politicians of the old, still ruling parties could not shirk their duty to make choices. Was Stalin the more dangerous enemy or was Hitler? To what extent was Hitler, as Buchanan and before him A.J.P. Taylor have argued, simply pursuing traditional German statecraft, seeking escape from the terms of Versailles and an ingathering of German peoples? To argue this, it helps to overlook not only Hitler’s writings—about which there was nothing traditional—but also the dynamics of his regime. It is true that the commitment to carry out the Holocaust was not made until 1942. But the Nazi regime virtually from its inception meant concentration camps, the end of political freedom, mass arrests, and a free pass for Nazi street thugs. German foreign

policy was eventually seen as an extension of that brutality so that after 1938, even those inclined to appease Hitler no longer believed it possible. There was some time lag before these perceptions became set in more distant America.

But that would change as well: the America First position, decidedly popular in 1939, was beginning to lose the battle for public opinion by the spring of 1940. The instinctive healthy reflex of steering clear of Europe's affairs was overtaken by recognition that a Nazi-dominated Europe would change America. To maintain its independence in such a world, Washington faced the prospect of becoming a garrison state with a large standing army—something Americans had always resisted. The success of Hitlerism threatened, if not directly America, the American way of life.

The questions we ask today about Chamberlain, Churchill, and Munich may be too specific. Should Britain have fought Hitler in 1938 or waited a year or two until its crash program of fighter-plane production was well underway? This is not easy even for the specialist to answer. Nevertheless, the Munich deferral of war has become a potent

“The America First position, decidedly popular in 1939, was beginning to lose the battle for public opinion by the spring of 1940.”

symbol. In the 1960s, the American foreign-policy elite was in deep thrall to its lessons—and consequently tried to demonstrate how well they had learned them in the jungles and rice paddies of Vietnam. Today Munich is more an invented lesson—nearer to what Daniel Patrick Moynihan called “boob bait for the bubbas”—used as propaganda for the Iraq War and for starting a fresh war with Iran.

The current Iraq morass is in part an outgrowth of the strategy the United States adopted without discussion at the end of the Cold War—that of seeking unilateral global hegemony. Making the United States stronger militarily in every part of the world than any regional power was deemed vital to American security. The neoconservatives were explicit in advocating this, but mainstream liberals hardly objected. Virtually the entire bipartisan Washington establishment now considers it normal that the United States spends as much militarily as the rest of the world combined.

In America's own pursuit of world hegemony, historical analogies suggest themselves—but not Munich, when Britain and the United States were woefully under-armed

compared to Germany. Look instead to German conduct in the prelude to the First World War, when the Reich, the most powerful state in the world, felt itself encircled, while its military and diplomatic leaders grotesquely exaggerated the threats they faced. If Germany didn't confront tsarist Russia then, the opportunity would be lost: preventive war was the much discussed option. Learned men in the thrall of worst-case thinking were blind to the ways Germany's outward thrusts of power were perceived by others.

Future historians will ponder the attitudes of the contemporary American establishment, leading a country armed to the gills, desperate to convince itself that it faces existential threats from minor powers, its spirit at once fearful and bullying. We might pray that analogies to Wilhelmine Germany never fit too well. ■

Thomas E. Woods Jr. Patrick J. Buchanan deserves respect for

blasting open an important historical question that the gatekeepers of allowable opinion probably assumed they had welded shut. According to the official version of American history, we are supposed to draw from World War II only a series of neat lessons about “appeasement” and our government's unquenchable thirst for justice. Innocently wondering if there might have been some alternative to 50 million deaths and the most terrible war in history is enough to make you an object of suspicion—what are you, some kind of extremist?

Even from parts of the Right, the subject of World War II elicits the shrill denunciations, the smears, and the unchallengeable orthodoxies for which conservatives have traditionally condemned the politically correct Left. Buchanan may be wrong (though I do not think he is), but there is nothing wicked or perverse about considering contrary-to-fact scenarios in light of historical evidence. His prose is measured and non-polemical, and his judgments, which are shared by a great many historians and other figures of distinction, deserve to be considered on their merits. Claims that Buchanan's version of history is politically motivated can hardly be taken seriously, especially coming from people who have made comfortable livings out of distorting the historical record on behalf of their own foreign-policy ambitions.

Munich is the most obvious example. Counting on popular ignorance, neoconservatives never weary of applying the “lessons of Munich” to modern American foreign policy. These so-called lessons turn out to be a decontextualized

muddle of half-crazed maxims about the pointlessness of negotiation, the self-serving fraudulence of all enemy grievance claims, and the risk that unless the United States responds with overwhelming force to the slightest modification of the status quo—the justice or injustice of which is not up for discussion—we’ll soon be speaking Ruritanian. Cartoon history begets cartoon policy.

If only the matter had been as simple as modern propaganda about Munich would have it. In 1919, in defiance of the much heralded principle of self-determination, 3 million Germans had been consigned to what became second-class status in the new Czechoslovakia. German grievances, most of which were considered reasonable by just about everyone, had to be addressed one way or another if an endless cycle of war and punishment was to be avoided.

In other words, crushing Germany in a war over the Sudetenland would merely have returned Europe to square one: more punitive peace terms, further German resentment, and yet another episode of hyperpatriotic German politics aimed at revenge. Diplomats in the real world, denounced today as fools and appeasers, had a difficult situation on their hands as they approached this problem.

Buchanan makes a strong case against Britain giving a war guarantee to Poland rather than drawing a realistic line in the West that Hitler could not cross without risking war. George Kennan, as mainstream as they come, said so in a letter to Buchanan in 1999. And Ernest May, my old professor at Harvard, noted, “a government that a half-year earlier had resisted going to war for a faraway country with democratic institutions, well-armed military forces, and strong fortifications, now promised with no apparent reservations to go to war for a dictatorship with less-than-modern armed forces and wide-open frontiers.” A swashbuckling Polish regime was thus given the power to decide whether Britain would be drawn into war, a war Britain was absurdly unprepared to wage, much less win.

The number of politicians—and, later, historians—who considered Chamberlain’s war guarantee reckless and ill advised will surprise most readers. Lloyd George called it a “frightful gamble” and laughed out loud at the suggestion that it would deter Hitler. Even Churchill, in his official history, wondered (albeit disingenuously in light of his own position in 1939): “How could we protect Poland and make good our guarantee? ... Here was a decision taken at the worst possible moment and on the least satisfactory ground, which must surely lead to the slaughter of tens of millions of people.”

Why should legitimate opinions like these be beyond the pale?

Probably the most important reason that free discussion of World War II—the diplomatic blunders, the Allied atrocities, all the what ifs—has been frowned upon or suppressed is that some people perceive an implicit disregard for the unspeakable fate of Europe’s Jews. Yet it was the war itself that put Europe’s Jewish populations in danger in the first place, an obvious point that has been missed by all but a few writers.

In February 1942, for example, Goebbels wrote in his diaries, “World Jewry will suffer a great catastrophe. ... The Führer realizes the full implications of the great opportunity offered by this war.” A month later, after describing the deportations from Poland’s ghettos, Goebbels observed, “Fortunately, a whole series of possibilities presents itself for us in wartime that would be denied us in peacetime. We shall have to profit by this.”

“Because Britain issued the war guarantee to Poland and declared war on Germany,” writes Buchanan, “by June 1941 Hitler held hostage most of the Jews of Western Europe and the Balkans.” If he’s right, then with more sensible British diplomacy, the Jewish populations of Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Holland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, and Yugoslavia would have survived, just as the Jewish populations of Sweden, Switzerland, and the Iberian Peninsula did.

David Gordon, a (Jewish) scholar Buchanan thanks in his acknowledgments, has likewise wondered in light of all this: “Was it not a clear moral imperative to avoid the outbreak of war and, if possible, to secure the evacuation of the Jews from parts of Europe likely to fall under German control? Further, once war broke out, was it not imperative to end the war as soon as possible?” This, surely, is a morally serious position.

“It was the war itself that put Europe’s Jewish populations in danger in the first place, an obvious point that has been missed by all but a few writers.”

No one would have begrudged Buchanan a quiet retirement. He chose instead to re-examine a historical episode that all sectors of society treat with religious reverence, knowing full well how his work, which most of his opponents would not bother to read, would be received. But once the guardians of acceptable opinion have finished venting their spleens at what a scoundrel Buchanan is for not dutifully repeating the things he was taught in seventh grade,

normal people may begin to evaluate his thesis rationally. The existence of this symposium suggests that that process may have begun. ■

THOMAS E. WOODS, JR., is the New York Times bestselling author of eight books, including, most recently, *Who Killed the Constitution?: The Fate of American Liberty From World War I to George W. Bush* (with Kevin R.C. Gutzman).

Andrew J. Bacevich For historians, World War II revisionism is likely to remain a tough sell. The process of enshrining the conflict of 1939-45 as the “Good War” has now advanced to the point of being all but irreversible. The war’s canonical lessons, especially those relating to the perils of appeasement, have permanently etched themselves in our collective consciousness.

The problem with this orthodox interpretation is not that it’s wrong but that it is inadequate. The reflexive tendency to see every antagonist as another Hitler (or Stalin) and every sensitive diplomatic encounter as a potential Munich (or Yalta) has produced an approach to statecraft that is excessively militarized, needlessly inflexible, and insufficiently imaginative. The remedy is not to engage in a vain effort to change the way Americans remember World War II, however, but to restore that conflict to its proper context.

Ripped out of context, the war, especially the struggle against Nazi Germany, has become a parable. Whatever their value as a source of moral instruction, parables offer less help when it comes to understanding international politics. Parables simplify—and to simplify the past is necessarily to distort it.

The neoconservative writer Norman Podhoretz illustrates how this penchant for treating World War II as a parable yields distorted and even mischievous results. Since 9/11, he has insistently argued that the correct name for the conflict commonly known as the global war on terror is actually “World War IV.” Podhoretz’s logic runs like this: the Cold War was really “World War III,” essentially a replay of World War II, the threat posed by communism serving as a variant of the old threat posed by fascism. For Podhoretz, the horrific events of September 2001 thrust the West back to the days of September 1939. The imperative of the moment was to launch yet another crusade on behalf of freedom and democracy, this time against a third totalitarian ideology that Podhoretz labeled “Islamofascism.” All that was needed was

a new Winston Churchill to lead this crusade, and Podhoretz found his man, however improbably, in George W. Bush.

Strangely absent from Podhoretz’s narrative is the event that actually touched off this sequence of global conflicts and without which World Wars II and III—not to mention IV—would never have occurred. I refer here, of course, to the epic bloodletting of 1914-18, for a time known as “the Great War.”

Podhoretz gets away with ignoring World War I because the vast majority of his fellow citizens are similarly predisposed. For present-day Americans, the enterprise once fervently, then derisively, referred to as “the war to end all wars” possesses about as much political and cultural salience as Shays’ Rebellion.

This marginalization of World War I is unfortunate. In fact, that conflagration and the peacemaking process that followed offer a mother lode of instruction for American policymakers today.

“The enterprise once fervently, then derisively, referred to as ‘the war to end all wars’ possesses about as much political and cultural salience as Shays’ Rebellion.”

World War I does not easily reduce to a parable. Even a polemicist as talented as Podhoretz would be hard pressed to render it as a story pitting good against evil or freedom against totalitarianism. It was instead a vast, complex, and utterly avoidable tragedy, a war of empires on behalf of empire. A handful of naïve and stupid statesmen, who fancied that in war lay the solution to all manner of problems, inflicted incalculable moral and material damage upon Western civilization, while accelerating the decline of European power and leaving a poisonous legacy.

Doing his part to spread those poisons was none other than Winston Churchill, celebrated by Norman Podhoretz as the central figure in the reduction of World War II to a parable. As a member of the war cabinet, Churchill made contributions to British policy in World War I that are at least as worthy of study today as his contributions to World War II.

For example, as First Lord of the Admiralty in 1915, Churchill conceived of the Gallipoli campaign. To appropriate a term from our own day, this amphibious invasion of Turkey was expected to be a “cakewalk” opening up any number of additional opportunities. It turned out to be a disaster that consumed the lives of tens of thousands of British,

French, and Anzac soldiers while accomplishing nothing. Gallipoli still stands as a warning to those who fancy that military power offers the means to transform the Islamic world.

After the armistice of 1918, as secretary of state for the colonies, Churchill played an important role in redrawing the map of the Middle East. The purpose of this exercise was not to advance the cause of freedom and democracy but to extend British hegemony and control of Persian Gulf oil. One result of this effort was to invent the nation-state of Iraq, which soon became and remains a source of instability and disorder, although these days the United States rather than Great Britain foots most of the bills.

So let us by all means venerate the Winston Churchill who warned of the threat posed by Hitler and who inspired Britons to make their lonely stand against Nazi Germany in 1940, thereby stirring so many American hearts as well. Yet let us also remember the Churchill who did so much to bollix up the Middle East and to create the conditions that gave rise to the utterly avoidable tragedy that is Podhoretz's World War IV.

We can learn much not only from the Good Winston but from the Bad Winston as well. ■

ANDREW J. BACEVICH is professor of history and international relations at Boston University. His new book is *The Limits of Power*, published by Metropolitan Books.

Stuart Reid Where would we be without Hitler? He is the indispensable bad guy. If you want to unite people in hate, Hitler is your man. Five years ago, Saddam Hussein was the new Hitler. A couple of weeks ago in Parliament Square—where hard-core Marxists and clapped-out hippies were demonstrating against the farewell visit to London of the American president—George W. Bush was the new Hitler, again. Not so long ago, Ariel Sharon was the new Hitler. And Robert Mugabe actually refers to himself, with spiteful irony, as the “black Hitler,” as if being a regular Hitler were not good enough.

This obsession is a price we pay for Allied victory in World War II, though we might be equally obsessed, though less vocal about it, if we'd lost the war. In real life, Hitler was demoniac, a cruel and vicious tyrant and a racist of the most appalling depravity. One should not really need to make the point, but if you are going to bat for Patrick J. Buchanan, you really have no choice in the matter because Buchanan has challenged the postwar geopolitical consensus and by doing so has placed himself beyond the pale. Victor Davis Hanson

and Sir Christopher Hitchens, two of civilization's most formidable defenders, have expressed their grave displeasure.

The consensus Buchanan has challenged holds that World War II was the Good War, the necessary war, precisely because it was against Hitler. If, therefore, you suggest that the war was neither good nor necessary, as Buchanan does, you open yourself to charges of, at best, indifference to the suffering of Jews (and all other people murdered by Hitler) and, at worst, of Nazi sympathies. Or maybe, if you are lucky, of nothing more shameful than stupidity.

I like Pat Buchanan and I admire him. He is a brave and good man and a brilliant journalist. He is by no means the first to express skepticism about the propaganda of the victors, however. More than 40 years ago, in *The Origins of the Second World War*, A.J.P. Taylor observed that the Poles lost 6.5 million dead in World War II and the Czechs fewer than 100,000, and famously asked, “Which was better—to be a betrayed Czech or a saved Pole?” Only a Pole would be crazy enough to answer without hesitation: a saved Pole.

Most of *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War* is devoted to a history of the origins and conduct of World War II, but Buchanan's principal concern is with its long-term consequences. His message: the so-called lessons of the war years—that Munich was the ultimate betrayal and that you must never negotiate with bad guys—are a fraud, and a dangerous one, and it is because of that fraud that we are in Iraq.

If Bush's enemies think he is the new Hitler, his friends—such as remain—think he is the new Churchill. There is a Churchill cult in the White House, writes Buchanan, which after 9/11 “helped to persuade an untutored president that the liberation of Iraq from Saddam would be like the liberation of Europe from Hitler. ... In the triumphant aftermath of a ‘cake-walk’ war, democracy would put down roots in the Middle East ... and George W. Bush would enter history as the Churchill of his generation, while the timid souls who opposed his war of liberation would be exposed as craven appeasers.”

It didn't work out like that. Instead of a remake of “The Longest Day,” poor Bush got a horror movie. As Buchanan observes, “With all our braying about being the ‘indispensable nation’ and ‘Bring ‘em on’ braggadocio, we exhibited an imperial hubris the whole world came to detest.”

So far so good, so far so true. But was World War II—the neocons' all-time favorite war—a bad war in itself, as Buchanan maintains? It was, even though the destruction of Hitler and Hitlerism was an undoubted good. Not only did we reduce ourselves to the level of war criminals by killing hundreds of thousands of German and Japanese civilians in our bombing raids, but, considered globally, the overall cost of the war was horrifying, and so were the consequences: 50

million dead, the triumph of Stalin in half of Europe and of the equally savage Mao in China.

Was it, as Buchanan insists, unnecessary? I can quite see that it could in theory have been avoided, but—and here's the real question—so what if it could have been? It was not avoided. You can play “what if?” until the cows come home, and it will make no difference to what was, and what is, and what will be. Besides, the war does seem to me to have been necessary, at any rate, in the sense that it was unavoidable. It is hard to see how Hitler could in the end have been accommodated, which is not to say that the appeasers were wrong to have tried to avoid war. Chamberlain was hailed as a hero when he returned from Munich in 1938, and if I'd been living, I would have joined the cheering crowds.

It is, of course, possible—as Buchanan argues—that if there had not been a war in the West, many fewer Jews would have died: no war, no Holocaust is Buchanan's line. And yet... There would have been a war in the East, come what may, and it might have been far bloodier than the one that brought us Stalingrad, with its 1 million dead. We can't just shrug our shoulders at that possibility. Chamberlain behaved honorably in trying to avoid war, and he behaved honorably in going to war.

“It is hard to see how Hitler could in the end have been accommodated, which is not to say that the appeasers were wrong to have tried to avoid war.”

Buchanan has no doubt that the moral responsibility for the war rests with Hitler, but at times displays what seems like an obsessive hostility to Churchill and talks of the two world wars as “Churchill's wars.” That's not going to play well in my corner of England. As perhaps the only contributor to this symposium that Hitler tried to kill—I was a 2-year-old in London when the V2s were falling—I am forced to say, in my best Cockney: leave it aht, Pat.

That's one difficulty I have with Buchanan. The other is that he remains a convinced cold warrior and has what strikes me as an unrealistically high opinion of Ronald Reagan. If you are going to oppose wars of choice—liberal imperialism, at any rate—you really ought to question the gung-ho, missile-wielding anticommunist rhetoric of the '40s, '50s, and '60s. Buchanan believes we did not have to fight Hitler, but he sometimes seems upset that we did not fight Stalin.

As it happens, I was a keen cold warrior myself and still believe the communists presented a convincing threat: the

Soviet Union, after all, really did have weapons of mass destruction. But Vietnam? It seemed a good idea to some of us at the time—I was a noisy supporter—but it now looks increasingly stupid and ugly. Over 58,000 American soldiers and 2 million Vietnamese civilians died, and the communists won. And the dominoes did not fall. Perhaps Vietnam should be chalked up as another success of the military-industrial complex Buchanan so rightly deplores. Perhaps Iraq is really the new Vietnam. ■

STUART REID *writes from London.*

Christopher Layne Even with the passage of some seven decades, the events of the 1930s have the capacity to ignite the passions of historians and policy analysts. They—or at least Winston S. Churchill's rendering of them—have provided the myths, metaphors, and images that still shape the discourse about American foreign policy: falling dominoes, insatiably aggressive dictators, and the folly of trying to “appease”—that is, conduct diplomacy with—non-democratic regimes.

In arguing that Winston Churchill helped bring on World War II, Pat Buchanan aimed at the wrong target. The perniciousness of Churchill's role lies not in his contribution to the march to war but in the way he shaped historical memory of the events of that portentous decade.

During the 1930s, Churchill was sidelined politically and had no discernible influence on British policy. By the time he joined the cabinet in August 1939, the critical decisions that led Britain into World War II had already been made. But Churchill painted an infinitely more heroic picture of his role during the 1930s: that of a modern-day Cassandra. In *The Gathering Storm*, Churchill alleged that—except for him—British leaders were willfully blind to the German threat and failed to meet it by rearming. Had Britain followed a different—Churchillian—policy during the 1930s, he claimed, the disasters of 1940, and possibly war itself, might have been avoided.

Of course, Churchill did not aspire to write an objective history. As David Reynolds reminds us in his splendid *In Command of History*, Churchill's dominant motive was “to show that he was right, or at least as right as it seemed credible to claim.” With respect to the events of the 1930s, Churchill wanted to prove that “the Second World War broke out because his policies were not adopted.” But when the British archives were opened in the late 1960s, historians realized that Churchill's version of events was distorted.

British leaders—especially Chamberlain—were not blind to the German threat and rearmed against it by building up the Royal Air Force and Navy. Under Chamberlain's direction, London adopted a sophisticated strategy that aimed to combine diplomacy and deterrence to avoid war while allowing Britain to retain its empire and hold on to world-power status. Reynolds observes that during the 1930s, "Churchill was broadly at one with Chamberlain" with respect to British strategic priorities. In a real sense, therefore, *The Gathering Storm* was a work of self-revisionism.

The one substantive policy difference between Chamberlain and Churchill was over a possible "Grand Alliance" with the Soviet Union to oppose Hitler. Churchill advocated this, but as Chamberlain knew from British intelligence reports—the accuracy of which has been confirmed by the opening of the Soviet archives—Stalin's plan was not to have the Soviet Union stand up to Hitler, but to pass the buck to Britain and France. For a variety of reasons, Churchill's proposed Grand Alliance was never a viable strategic option during the late 1930s.

Chamberlain was playing a weak hand because Britain's position was a textbook case of strategic overstretch: London had too many enemies (Japan and Italy in addition to Germany), too few allies, and not enough resources to deal with its geopolitical challenges. As the archives show, Chamberlain was never an advocate of "peace at any price." He made clear that Britain would resist direct German aggression in Western Europe but—like all post-1919 British governments—did not regard Britain's vital interests as being at stake in East Central Europe.

"One of the great ironies of Churchill's legacy is that a one-off event has been transmuted into a set of universal rules of statecraft."

Chamberlain and his colleagues had good reasons not to go to war over Czechoslovakia during the September 1938 Munich crisis. As early as March, following the Anschluss, Britain's highest political and military leaders had correctly concluded that there was nothing Britain and France could do to prevent Germany from overrunning the Czechs. British leaders also understood that a conflict over Czechoslovakia would not remain a limited affair but would quickly escalate into a world war that would imperil Britain's empire. Chamberlain, his foreign secretary Lord Halifax, and the British chiefs of staff understood that taking up arms on the Czechs' behalf was nothing more than a pretext for fighting a preven-

tive war—an option they rejected on the grounds that, as Halifax put it, there was no sense in fighting a certain war now to avoid a possibly uncertain war later.

Buchanan stands in good company with historians in arguing that the Polish guarantee was a mistake. Strategically, the arguments against going to war over Poland were just as strong—for the same reasons—as the case for not fighting over Czechoslovakia. The British guaranteed Poland not because the geopolitical picture changed but because the domestic political balance of power in London shifted between September 1938 and March 1939, when German troops marched into Prague. In issuing the guarantee, Britain fulfilled Stalin's fondest wishes by entangling Germany in a war with Britain and France and deflecting its expansion from east to west; allowing the Soviet Union to make territorial gains in East Central Europe; and offering the prospect that the Soviet Union's relative power would increase as the Western powers and Germany bled each other in another great European war.

Far from being the naïve appeaser portrayed by Churchill, Chamberlain was a hard-edged realist who was willing to sacrifice small countries like Abyssinia and Czechoslovakia to achieve his larger strategic objectives. He believed that his responsibility was to uphold British interests rather than to defend abstract principles like "collective security" or normative concerns about the fates of small nations. To be sure, Chamberlain's strategy failed. But far from proving that his approach was bad, this failure demonstrated that Hitler was a unique phenomenon in international politics: a leader who could be neither deterred nor appeased. One of the great ironies of Churchill's legacy is that a one-off event has been transmuted into a set of universal rules of statecraft.

Long after those who made it have died, history matters. The purported "lessons of the past" derived from the 1930s have been invoked to justify virtually every major American military intervention from the Korean War to the invasion of Iraq. But these lessons have been transformed from analogy into myth. Unlike analogies—the validity of which can be contested (if not definitively resolved) by normal modes of scholarly inquiry—myths are beyond question. When elites bring myths into play, they do so not to promote debate over policy but to silence dissent by delegitimizing their opponents.

The Churchillian narrative has acquired a myth-like status in America's foreign-policy discourse and is invoked by U.S. elites to claim that there is no alternative to America's expansive post-1945 world role and to discredit critics by equating grand strategic restraint with isolationism and appeasement. Since 2001, the Bush administration and its neoconservative supporters have regularly invoked this

myth to gain support for, and shut down opposition to, their policies on Iraq, Iran, terrorism, and their uncritical support for Israel (which they compare to 1938 Czechoslovakia).

Debunking the Churchillian myth about the 1930s—getting history right—is a vital step toward restoring intellectual integrity to the ongoing debate about American grand strategy. By rekindling interest in this period of history, Pat Buchanan has performed an important service regardless of whether one agrees with all the details of his argument. ■

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Ted Galen Carpenter The World War II experience is so pervasive in American culture that it's nearly imprinted on the national DNA. People who know nothing about other periods of U.S. and world history know—or think they know—the lessons of World War II. The pop-culture version is roughly as follows: Weak and naïve Western leaders, especially British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, foolishly attempted to appease Adolf Hitler at Munich, but their supine behavior merely emboldened him, and Nazi aggression soon engulfed Europe. The heroic Franklin Roosevelt tried to rouse the American people to join the fight before it was too late, but he had to overcome the resistance of shortsighted isolationists. Ultimately, Japan—Germany's ally—forced the issue of American involvement by launching an unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor. The U.S. then assumed its essential role as world leader, which apparently it must continue to play forever.

Three generations of American policymakers and pundits have regarded the war's lessons as indisputable. First, aggression must always be halted at the outset, wherever it surfaces. Appeasement merely whets the appetites of aggressors and leads to larger, more destructive conflicts under less favorable circumstances for peace-loving nations. Second, no adverse development anywhere in the world is entirely irrelevant to the security and well-being of the United States. Arguments to the contrary reflect flawed isolationist thinking and risk repeating the strategy that nearly produced a totalitarian-dominated planet.

A few brave souls occasionally question this orthodoxy. They invariably receive torrents of abuse. Pat Buchanan has

experienced that response twice: in 1999, with the publication of a chapter on World War II in *A Republic, Not an Empire*, and now with the appearance of *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War*.

The argument that the United States could and should have remained on the sidelines in World War II is not entirely convincing—at least with respect to the European theater. It assumes that Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union would have exhausted themselves in a stalemated struggle, and the United States and other Western powers would then have been well positioned to pick up the pieces after the collapse of the two totalitarian giants. The situation might have worked out that way, but such a strategy would have been high-risk. It is equally possible that either Germany or the USSR would have scored a decisive victory and then dominated all of Europe. A Soviet-controlled continent would have been catastrophic; a Europe dominated by Nazi Germany and its volatile, extremely aggressive dictator would have been even worse. Roosevelt deserves criticism for the deceitful way in which he maneuvered America toward war, but his alarm at the danger a totalitarian Europe could pose to America was not misplaced.

The Pacific theater was different. Japan's expansionism, while brutal, was not dramatically worse than some European empire-building in the 19th century. With better diplomacy, America probably could have reached a *modus vivendi* with Japan and avoided war. Instead of seeking pragmatic solutions, however, the Roosevelt administration presented Tokyo with a laundry list of unrealistic and humiliating

“Instead of seeking pragmatic solutions, the Roosevelt administration presented Tokyo with a laundry list of unrealistic and humiliating demands.”

demands—couched in moralistic, sermonizing terms worthy of the Democratic Party's sainted hero Woodrow Wilson. When the Japanese government did not capitulate, Washington ratcheted up the pressure through economic sanctions, including an oil embargo that threatened to strangle Japan's economy and military. The predictable result was war.

Whether or not America's entry into World War II was wise, the supposed lessons of the conflict have distorted U.S. foreign policy and suffocated prudent strategies for more than six decades. American officials and pundits have portrayed an array of tin-pot dictators as the reincarnation of Hitler: Kim Il-Sung, Ho Chi Minh, Slobodan Milosevic,

Saddam Hussein. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld even tried to equate the clownish Hugo Chavez with Hitler. The notion that decrepit, third-rate powers such as North Vietnam, Serbia, Iraq, and Venezuela could ever compare to Nazi Germany—which had the world’s second-largest economy and a modern, extremely capable military—would be humorous if U.S. leaders did not base policy on that fallacy.

Overuse of the Munich analogy impelled U.S. policymakers to intervene in Vietnam. The argument was that failure to block Hanoi’s bid to reunify the country under a communist regime would lead to a cascade of “wars of national liberation” and produce a third world war. The Clinton administration similarly invoked the specter of Europe degenerating into chaos to justify meddling in the Bosnian civil war. And the image of Saddam Hussein as rapacious aggressor became the rationale for the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

This habit of applying the World War II template to U.S. policy in vastly different circumstances has led to threat inflation and strategic overextension. In just the past two decades, the United States has used significant military force on ten occasions, in places as diverse as Panama, Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans, and the Persian Gulf. That record belies President Bush’s soothing assurances that the United States regards the use of force as a last resort. Equally worrisome, Washington extends security commitments to more and more small, militarily useless client states that have parochial quarrels with large neighbors. America is now on the hook to defend Taiwan from China and the tiny Baltic republics from Russia. We are on the brink of interfering in the spat between Russia and Georgia over the political status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Basic prudence should scream a warning against incurring such risks.

But the fear that even the most mundane and obscure conflicts could trigger another global conflagration has rendered American policymakers incapable of distinguishing serious threats from lesser problems—or even trivial developments. To hawks, it is always 1938, and every adversary is the next Hitler.

Americans must get beyond such thinking, or our country risks an endless series of Vietnam and Iraq-style debacles—if not something even worse. World War II was an exceptional situation, not the norm in international affairs. We should give the Munich analogy a long overdue burial. ■

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Michael Vlahos Just saying “World War II” is like scratching extra opinion on some great basalt stele. World War II was not a great event: rather, it is the American sacred. Invoking it is not retelling history but repeating homily. Its spare and tight four-year story is the heart of our national narrative.

The power of the World War II sacred comes across like a jolt: just feeling the passion from readers’ comments on Patrick Buchanan’s *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War* and the review here by John Lukacs is like underscoring with a razor.

We have seen the World War II sacred trumpeted in full during the 9/11 war. Its ancient rhetoric has been this administration’s neon rod and staff, its fire and brimstone: Munich, Pearl Harbor, Iwo Jima, the Battle of the Bulge. For seven years, political opposition has simply withered before the stainless authority of World War II.

This is the power of American holy war. Our great wars are crystallizing moments along the path of our religious nationalism: defining, reinterpreting, and celebrating ourselves.

But so it has been for all modernity. In the world of religious nationalism, war has operated like a liturgy. Its narrative cycle has been a touchstone story in which a people struggle, sacrifice, and transcend. The form of the rite—shared by so many cultures—should look familiar:

A threat to existence suddenly looms ... the evil face of the enemy (that we had refused to see) is at once revealed ... there is a national awakening ... the Oath is sealed as the nation’s pledge ... the Leader arises ... and then comes the sacrifice of the pure, the pious, the young ... there is a culminating moment of sacrifice and then national transcendence ... the enemy is laid low and forever vanquished ... and, in triumph, the nation is reunited and a world delivered from darkness.

This is the liturgy of religious nationalism; the grand creation of Western modernity. At its cresting, it was the world of Churchill’s young manhood. The great struggle of nations—and its irresistible, sacred promises—became his personal emotional focal point. Churchill knew the power of the ritual sacred as well as any man in modernity, and he knew how to invoke the juju of its anointed language.

This was not idle fantasy. In the formative zeitgeist of Churchill’s political rise, looming German power merged into existential threat. This was an almost atavistic British storyline going back to Napoleon. For Churchill, it instantly overturned the easy, dreamy narrative of Victoria’s empire resplendent, fearing nothing more than French Third Republic ironclads and tsarist commerce raiders. Now came the hard light of the 20th century.

So Kipling's loving carapace was thrown off in many deep ways insufficiently mythic for Kipling's pupils—England's earnest boys. As Churchill emerged from the compleat Victorian, he sought the far grander literary realization that a rising hard heroic promised.

We need to position Churchill in the new century's framing of British sacred narrative—the story that consumed his mature life from Kaiser to Nazi to Commissar. Lurid as his historical recounting of evil nemeses became in branded prose, their persona nonetheless in his rhetoric represented the agents of glorious epiphany: “Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour.’” His vision of Britain's eternal greatness—his own apotheosis—desperately needed threats darkly mythic and heroic.

Paradoxically, when World War I crushed so much of the British spirit, it drove him on. Churchill's life mission

“The grand success of Winston Churchill was his interweaving of Victorian Imperial narrative—and all of its propaganda tropes—into the contemporary consciousness of American national identity after 1945.”

became exhuming and reanimating his mythical British Empire and restoring its true “Crown Imperial.” Above all, Churchill was attuned to the limitless opportunity his insight and its messaging power gave him. With every book he wrote, he enlarged the electric perimeter of English sacred war.

Because he so authentically inhabited this world, he could effortlessly step into the heart of its liturgy. So his own personally transcendent act—that leap of faith in 1940—instantly remade the awkward and doomed war of Chamberlain and Halifax. He saved Britain with sacred language that would have been laughed out of court just months before.

But he did something more, too. He began to script a new and bigger narrative—that of the Churchillian Mahdi. It is this that so heaps and tasks us Americans, and for good reason. This is what he did:

The Second World War became indistinguishable from his same-titled six-volume epic. Our American sacred narrative

became *The History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. And our world-historical task became the dutiful discharging of his Fulton, Missouri charge of Iron Curtain and the Cold War—his Cold War.

Churchill's rhetoric, so centrally mythic for Britons in 1940, became the organizing rhetoric of America in the Cold War, and he became The Man.

There was never any question that this man would be at the center of history. Samuel Hoare quipped, “Winston has written an enormous book about himself and called it ‘The World Crisis’”—and he could pull this off in World War I. But he was bigger and smarter than narcissism.

Beyond even his worshipful acolytes today, Churchill achieved this: through his reification as American Mahdi—greater even than FDR—he effectively inserted himself and threaded his personal vision into American sacred narrative in the 9/11 war.

This status is not inconsiderable. Furthermore, it birthed no vague convening of cigar-circling puffers but rather a living brotherhood. The Churchillian Fraternity in America comes so much closer than, say, “neocon,” to revealing the inner reality of the 9/11 war.

The grand success of Winston Churchill was his interweaving of Victorian Imperial narrative—and all of its propaganda tropes—into the contemporary consciousness of American national identity after 1945. The proud fulfillment of his handiwork was that after 9/11, the Churchillian narrative instantly took over. In improbable and yet essential ways Winston Churchill has owned the 9/11 war. Moreover, he achieved this legitimacy because he truly understood the American mythic narrative cycle.

But here is the downside: most Americans do not want a “Crown Imperial” in their sacred story. Yet a boisterous minority still yearns. Indeed, we have watched them aggressively make it so these past seven years. Churchill's success is thus a discordant visitation on America, helping to divide us as a nation.

In a sense, the battles on these pages represent Churchill's real legacy and lesson for Americans. You cannot force an alien vision—even anointed by mythic provenance—on a people who want something different for humanity, whose national identity is rooted not in imperial destiny but in altruism here and salvation hereafter. ■

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The Next War?

OF THE AXIS OF EVIL nations named in his State of the Union in 2002, President Bush has often said, "The United States will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons."

He failed with North Korea. Will he accept failure in Iran, though there is no hard evidence Iran has an active nuclear-weapons program?

William Kristol of *The Weekly Standard* says a U.S. attack on Iran after the election is more likely should Barack Obama win. Presumably, Bush would trust John McCain to keep Iran nuclear free. Yet to start a third war in the Middle East against a nation three times as large as Iraq, and leave it to a new president to fight, would be a daylight hijacking of the Congressional war power and a criminally irresponsible act, for Congress alone has the power to authorize war.

But Israel is even today pushing Bush into a pre-emptive war with a naked threat to attack Iran itself should Bush refuse the cup.

In April, Israel held a five-day civil defense drill. In June, Israel sent 100 F-15s and F-16s, with refueling tankers and helicopters to pick up downed pilots, toward Greece in a simulated attack, a dress rehearsal for war. The planes flew 1,400 kilometers, the distance to Iran's uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz.

Ehud Olmert came home from a June meeting with Bush to tell Israelis, "We reached agreement on the need to take care of the Iranian threat. ... I left with a lot less question marks regarding the means, the timetable restrictions and American resoluteness. ... George Bush understands the severity of the Iranian threat and the need to vanquish it, and intends to act on

the matter before the end of his term. ... The Iranian problem requires urgent attention, and I see no reason to delay this just because there will be a new president in the White House seven and a half months from now."

If Bush is discussing war on Iran with Ehud Olmert, why is he not discussing it with Congress or the nation?

On June 6, Deputy Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz threatened, "If Iran continues its nuclear weapons program, we will attack it." The price of oil shot up 9 percent.

Is Israel bluffing—or planning to attack Iran if America balks? Previous air strikes on the PLO command in Tunis, on the Osirak reactor in Iraq, and on the presumed nuclear reactor site in Syria last September give Israel a high degree of credibility.

Still, attacking Iran would be no piece of cake. Israel lacks the stealth and cruise-missile capacity to degrade Iran's air defenses systematically and no longer has the element of surprise. Israeli planes and pilots would likely be lost. Israel also lacks the ability to stay over the target or conduct follow-up strikes. The U.S. Air Force bombed Iraq for five weeks with hundreds of daily runs in 1991 before General Schwarzkopf moved. Moreover, if Iran has achieved the capacity to enrich uranium, she has surely moved centrifuges to parts of the country that Israel cannot reach—and can probably replicate anything lost.

Israel would also have to over-fly Turkey, or Syria and U.S.-occupied Iraq, or Saudi Arabia to reach Natanz. Turks, Syrians, and Saudis would deny Israel permission and might resist. For the U.S. military to let Israel over-fly

Iraq would make us an accomplice. How would that sit with the Europeans who are supporting our sanctions on Iran and want the nuclear issue settled diplomatically?

And who can predict with certitude how Iran would respond? Would Iran attack Israel with rockets, inviting retaliation with Jericho and cruise missiles from Israeli submarines? Would she close the Gulf with suicide-boat attacks on tankers and U.S. warships? With oil at \$135 a barrel, Israeli air strikes on Iran would seem to ensure a 2,000-point drop in the Dow and a world recession.

What would Hamas, Hezbollah, and Syria do? All three are now in indirect negotiations with Israel. U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq could be made by Iran to pay a high price in blood that could force the United States to initiate its own air war in retaliation and finish a war Israel had begun. But a U.S. war on Iran is not a decision Bush can out-source to Ehud Olmert.

Last week, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Adm. Michael Mullins left for Israel. CBS News cited U.S. officials as conceding the trip comes "just as the Israelis are mounting a full court press to get the Bush administration to strike Iran's nuclear complex."

Vice President Cheney is said to favor U.S. strikes. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Mullins are said to be opposed.

Moving through Congress, powered by the Israeli lobby, is House Resolution 362, which demands that President Bush impose a U.S. blockade of Iran, an act of war.

Is it not time the American people were consulted on the next war that is being planned for us? ■

Their Day in Court

Boumediene was a flawed decision—but right.

By William Ziegler

THE JUNE 12 *Boumediene v. Bush* Supreme Court opinion is in many ways a bad decision but probably a necessary one. Angered over the prospect that habeas corpus protections now apply constitutionally to detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Senator McCain called it “one of the worst decisions in the history of this country.” In *U.S. News and World Report*, Glenn Sulmasy, a fellow at the JFK School at Harvard, wrote that the case “disregarded both centuries of precedent and the military deference doctrine.” Over at *National Review*, Andrew McCarthy said it was “cataclysmic” in an article telling us, “Welcome to *Boumediene* world, where the judges run the war.”

Some are pleased—not just peaceniks and human-rights activists but libertarians and antiwar conservatives. Yet even they should reflect for a moment: a constitutional protection now reaches to non-U.S. citizens, not incarcerated within the sovereign territory of the U.S., many of whom were captured on battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan. So what is the end result after *Boumediene*? Will all enemy prisoners in future wars have the right to our criminal-court system to seek habeas relief, which could include release from detention? Probably not, but then what is to stop some crazy federal circuit—the Ninth Circuit, aka “Ninth Circus,” perhaps—from ruling that they do?

That the *Boumediene* majority opinion came from Justice Anthony Kennedy didn't help. Kennedy has taken on Sandra Day O'Connor's role as the weathervane vote, a status reinforced in the recent milestone 2nd Amendment case on handguns, *D.C. v. Heller*. When it was discov-

ered Kennedy was writing the *Boumediene* opinion, Supreme Court watchers assumed that he would go with the Scalia wing. The transcript of the oral argument shows that he was leaning somewhat to the government's position when, near the end, he asked why the D.C. Court of Appeals, the court empowered to review Gitmo detainees' cases, couldn't decide matters, presumably letting the detainee procedures stand.

Kennedy's gooey tendencies have driven Justice Scalia to intellectual fury before, and he certainly does it again in *Boumediene*. One feels the taffy pulling in the swing voter's long, somewhat pointless excursions into the history of habeas and in his meandering, arbitrary three-part test that may—or may not—help determine whether a writ of habeas corpus should apply in cases involving foreign nationals such as Boumediene.

Yet Kennedy's annoying opinion, with all its vagaries, should not obscure the fact that *Boumediene* was correctly decided. That's not because of abstract, at times abstruse, legal arguments and principles at stake involving separation of powers, sovereignty, and judicial deference but rather a set of painful circumstances at the core of *Boumediene* that couldn't be legally outmaneuvered by the government's best efforts.

First, before launching into the jurisprudence, it has to be noted that the primary petitioner and many of his fellows don't fit neatly into the war on terror paradigm. Lakhdar Boumediene was not captured on a Mideast battlefield but in Bosnia, which at the time of his capture was friendly to the United States. He is

Algerian and was living in Bosnia when, at the demand of the U.S., he was arrested in October 2001 on suspicion of committing terrorist acts in that country (not the U.S.). In January 2002, the Bosnian Supreme Court ordered him and others released for lack of evidence.

But shortly thereafter, under enormous American pressure, Bosnia turned Boumediene and his comrades over to U.S. military forces. They were then flown to Camp Delta at Gitmo, where they have been imprisoned ever since. The dates are telling: Boumediene was swept up not long after the overwhelming events of Sept. 11, 2001. Is it possible that he and the others are not the terrorists that they were made out to be? Perhaps they are every bit the savages that President Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said they were. But of course, this begs the question: Can we know for sure if the procedures that determine the question are faulty and are not subject to adequate judicial review?

During those six years of detention, which included lengthy periods of solitary confinement for many of the men, the Supreme Court and Congress continued to up the ante on each other. In *Rasul v. Bush* (2004), the court held that the federal habeas statute applied to Gitmo detainees. In 2005, Congress countered by passing the Detainee Treatment Act (DTA), which among other things removed that statute's plenary reach and provided just one federal venue, the D.C. Court of Appeals, for review of the Combatant Status Review Tribunals (CSRT's) that determined a detainee's status. In 2006, the Supreme Court ruled in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* that the DTA did not apply to habeas petitions filed before the act. So Congress went back and passed another law, the Military Commissions Act (MCA) of 2006, which totally wiped out any possible reach-back of habeas for those cases, shutting the door once and for all—or so it seemed.

Behind the scenes of the legislation, plenty of space remained for executive branch involvement. The DTA and MCA did not necessarily bloom forth from the minds of lawmakers intent on reflecting the deeply held views of their constituents. These were acts ushered into Congress via administration factotums such as Sen. Lindsey Graham, who also serves as a reserve judge advocate colonel in the Air Force. Their substance was largely drafted by attorneys in the Departments of State and Justice.

It's known that there was tension between DOJ and DOD on the detainee-treatment issue. Many in the DOJ thought the provisions that were passed were too pro-detainee, while many DOD lawyers wanted to pull the proposed detainee tribunals further into the orbit of existing law of war jurisprudence so that the detainee hearings would closely resemble standard military commissions. Many in the DOD legal community sought something closer to an Article 5 tribunal under the Geneva Conventions and set forth as established procedure in Army Regulation 190-8.

What emerged in the legislation was a procedure that the government in *Boumediene* argued was "virtually identical" to what was in the regulation. But the reality is more subtle. For example, AR 190-8 does not explicitly give detainees right to counsel, whereas the CSRT gives the detainee a right to a "personal representative." At first glance this seems an improvement. But in practice, counsel has been provided in the past—in Vietnam, for example—under AR 190-8. The CSRT, on the other hand, expressly forbids the personal representative from being a judge advocate—a transparent effort to prevent an attorney-client relationship from being formed. Furthermore, the CSRT can consider any evidence, including that gained during a coerced interrogation, even torture. At CSRT's, witnesses have almost never

been called by the government and have almost always been denied to the detainee. In fact, in nearly 90 percent of cases, no evidence is presented on the detainee's behalf.

This sort of thing can be sensationalized by human-rights groups, but the CSRT's are not total kangaroo courts. More detainees have been released from Gitmo (about 390) than are still there (about 340). Nonetheless, to an outsider, and to one charged with determining whether the procedure is adequate, the CSRT process looks cooked. One major problem is that even if a detainee is not found guilty of a war crime, he still might be preventively detained for the duration of the conflict, which, in the current understanding of the global war on terror, could span generations.

The biggest problem, at least for the Supreme Court, is the power of the judiciary to review the whole process—to act as an outside arbiter over the CSRT in lieu of the petitioners having habeas rights. Under the procedure, the D.C. Court of Appeals has only been allowed under the DTA to determine whether the CSRT followed its own procedures and whether they are consistent with constitutional provisions. That latter constitutional review provision might give some flexibility, but since the DTA explicitly put habeas beyond the reach of the court, even if the D.C. court found something constitutionally problematic, it couldn't compel a habeas-type relief (release) anyway—it would simply send the case back to Gitmo again.

As *Boumediene* finally made it to the Supreme Court, pundits and experts weighed in from all sides. Some retired high-ranking former judge advocates claimed that the CSRT procedures would leave American prisoners in future wars more vulnerable to indefinite detention without review, and possibly worse, and that standard Geneva Convention practice should be the norm. (This is not nec-

essarily conjectural: there is evidence that applying the Geneva Convention treatment to captured Vietcong may have ameliorated conditions for captured Americans during the Vietnam War.)

Others joined in on different issues. The libertarian Cato Institute filed for the *Boumediene* side (its separation of powers argument apparently agreed upon by Kennedy). Various human-rights groups and European agencies cited international treaties filled with open-ended, declaratory language that dogooders and scolds love to use to beat up on the United States. (To his credit, Kennedy avoided these arguments entirely.)

In the Dec. 5, 2007 oral arguments, the cast sounded familiar: Scalia sparring, Kennedy musing, Thomas silent, Breyer sympathizing. Both Solicitor General Paul Clement and Seth Waxman, *Boumediene*'s lawyer, did well under scrutiny. One could have come out of the courtroom thinking that while it could go either way, the government would probably pull through. It had on its side the principle of judicial deference to things political and, to an even greater degree, to things military. And in the *Hamdan* case, the Supreme Court had telegraphed what was thought to be the right answer: as long as the process accompanying the detention provided for a meaningful review of the detainee's case, that would likely suffice, and there would be no need for habeas review. The CSRT process would presumably fit the bill.

And the government had at least one relatively recent case (actually from 1950, though when discussing habeas corpus, which reaches to Magna Carta and beyond, a midcentury U.S. case is not bad): *Eisenstrager v. United States*, which should have nailed down the precedent issue. In that case, Justice Jackson, writing for the court, stated that German nationals being incarcerated in a German prison, though charged with war crimes under American military law, had no

habeas rights. The reason *Eisentrager* was supposed to be such a winner was that it plainly stated that habeas didn't apply extraterritorially and certainly not to alien enemies held abroad.

Yet the government did lose. Kennedy's opinion states that Section 7 of the MCA, which puts detainees beyond habeas reach, is an "unconstitutional suspension of the writ." The opinion, no judicial masterpiece, has two parts. The first deals with whether the habeas corpus protection applies at all to the Gitmo detainees; the second determines whether the CSRT procedures are an adequate substitute if habeas does reach. The two dissents took each of these arguments in turn: Scalia argued that habeas doesn't apply as a matter of established law and precedent, Roberts that the DTA process is a perfectly adequate substitute for habeas relief.

Kennedy's opening history lesson, in which he invokes the barons of Runnymede, Edward I, and 17th-century English jurisprudence, is mildly interesting, and it helps create some arguments on the separation of powers front. But tweedy references to debates in the House of Commons in 1763 over the reach of the Great Writ to the Channel Islands are not particularly compelling. Not until halfway through the first part of the discussion does Kennedy get to the central case in the discussion, *Eisentrager*. Noting that in that case the court denied the writ, he distinguishes *Eisentrager* on its facts and then derives from it a three-part test—actually he says there are "at least" three factors—to determine the reach of the habeas right in *Boumediene*: the citizenship of the detainee and the adequacy of the process to determine status; the sites of apprehension and detention; and, most open-endedly, the "practical obstacles inherent in resolving the prisoners' entitlement to the writ."

It is pretty patchwork stuff: the test looks sloppy and vague and the third

The FBI has been warning some high-profile American Jews that Hezbollah might be targeting them. The Bureau and CIA have reportedly been receiving information culled from terrorist websites that suggests a wave of attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets in the United States and in Europe might be impending in retaliation for the February killing of Hezbollah operations chief Imad Mugniyah in Damascus. Mugniyah was killed by the Israelis with American and possibly even Syrian connivance. The threat information is admittedly the product of analysis that might be regarded as highly speculative and is lacking in any kind of detail, but sources report that networking appears to be taking place to prepare for a major operation or group of operations. The intelligence has triggered a review of just what capability Hezbollah might have inside the United States and speculation about whether the group might target individual prominent Jews.

The FBI believes that a number of terrorist sleeper cells were planted in the U.S. back in the 1980s, when Lebanon was a shooting war pitting Washington against Hezbollah. In those days, it was easier to enter the United States on a visa and disappear into the local immigrant communities—not that it is that difficult today. Whether those cells still exist, whether they are still communicating with Lebanon, and whether they have any capability to carry out a terrorist act is being hotly debated. The consensus at the CIA is that they are no longer a threat if they exist at all, but FBI and Homeland Security are providing more cautious assessments.



The discussions over Hezbollah are part of a larger debate in the intelligence community over terrorism in general. The Bush administration officially maintains that there is a major, organized terrorist threat—the global war on terror—that requires a massive security effort. It sees terrorism as centralized and disciplined, justifying the use of military force combined with greatly expanded intelligence and diplomatic resources to mount an effective response.

But experts like Dr. Marc Sageman, who has worked against terrorists while in the CIA and has studied their psychology and behavior, disagree. Sageman has seen the evolution of "leaderless" terrorism, in which disaffected individuals organize locally, fund themselves, and network on the Internet when they need information or advice. Such *jihad* was evident in the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London, which were locally planned and cost only a few hundred dollars to implement. They were devastating, but leaderless jihadis lack the organization and capabilities to stage another 9/11 or anything similar.

Sageman's views have not been well received because at stake is the huge anti-terrorism industry, which costs U.S. taxpayers in excess of \$100 billion per year. But if he is correct, then counter-terrorism should be redefined and returned to the criminal-justice system where it properly belongs. The police and FBI, if adequately trained and motivated through incentives in hiring and promotion, would be more than enough to deal with the domestic terrorism problem, putting a lot of terrorism specialists out of work and closing the cash spigot to their associated companies.

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factor is unhelpful, with the “at least” indicating that there is a mysterious penumbra awaiting further exploration. Equally unanswered in Kennedy’s opinion is what now goes along with the apparent habeas rights of review in the federal system. Will detainees be entitled to the full range of habeas procedural rights under the statute, such as full discovery, subpoena power over witnesses, access to classified documents, etc.? At present, it is unclear.

Kennedy’s opinion guaranteed Scalia would supernova, and the conservative’s dissent pours sarcasm and scorn all over the majority opinion. He fires off an opening *j’accuse* (“It will almost certainly cause more Americans to be killed”), says that Kennedy’s analysis produces a “crazy result,” and blasts the decision as driven by “an inflated notion of judicial supremacy.” Scalia, the ever clever law professor, launches withering counterarguments: You say separation of powers is a principle behind the habeas provision? Two can play that game: the separation doctrine constrains the judicial branch as well, via territorial limitation. You say *Eisentrager* mentioned practical concerns as a basis for determining whether habeas should apply to aliens overseas? Read it again, silly lad: in fact, *Eisentrager* mentions them as a reason *not* to give habeas in the first place.

Yet during his rampage Scalia himself makes a key point that inadvertently highlights the difference between *Eisentrager* and *Boumediene*: the prisoners in *Eisentrager* were prosecuted for crimes; Boumediene and his alleged compatriots are still in a status of detention “during an ongoing conflict.” *Eisentrager*’s prisoners would serve sentences; Boumediene and company have not been sentenced at all. Indeed, it is even possible that he and his alleged terrorist confreres could remain in detained status for an indefinite duration with no trial whatsoever.

As for Roberts’s dissent, aside from his skilled examination of the CSRT process

and his equally skillful dissection of Kennedy’s take on the CSRT, he presents the issue that Kennedy himself asked about during oral argument: it is premature to pronounce on the adequacy of the CSRT procedures when the very court designated to examine it, the D.C. Court of Appeals, has yet to assess them. (That court was bypassed on the issue by the petitioners themselves.) Roberts asserts that, for all intents and purposes, habeas-type relief would likely be available if the D.C. court actually reviewed the issues at hand and that as such the question before the Supreme Court is entirely speculative: how can we know what the D.C. court will do if it hasn’t had the chance to review in the first place?

It’s a compelling, near decisive argument that Kennedy might have accepted had this been 2005—even Justice Ginsburg asked something along these lines during argument. Throughout the case—in the questioning by the majority in oral argument, in the majority opinion, and in Souter’s concurrence—there was a simple set of facts. The 37 men who formed the petitioning party have been confined for six years, with no end in sight, and it is entirely within the scope of their detainee status that they could be preventively detained until the “conflict” is terminated, which might be a lifetime.

It was this—along with the Bush administration’s rhetoric of a generation-spanning global conflict against not just nations but also transnational organizations and persons with no allegiances to countries at all—that helped to bring about the *Boumediene* result. History moves forward, and while all presidential candidates have promised to close Gitmo, the detainee process creaks on. The instruments of the global war on terror are contradicted by the realities of American life in 2008.

The sense of existential crisis has long passed. Sept. 11 was two World War II’s ago, at least in terms of American involve-

ment. The nation may very possibly elect as president a man whose full name evokes by association the still wanted mastermind of 9/11 and the dictator of the country America invaded for fear of WMD. Gitmo’s detainees, as the years pass, look more and more like classic political prisoners held in godforsaken hellholes throughout the world. While that is standard in Liberia or Eritrea, it is galling when, of all people, a spokesman for President Ahmadinejad calls America the world’s biggest hostage taker.

Not all of this is the fault of the administration. But the Gitmo process should give reasonable people pause. One senses a lack of deep strategic thinking, a failure to consider the implications of the course of action taken. The Bush administration’s break from established methods of dealing with detainees—against the judgment of many key military advisers—looks to have been a major error. There is a standard way of dealing with detainees’ status and possible criminality—military tribunals. Even Boumediene’s lawyer conjectured that this could be a sufficient replacement for habeas review. Allowing hearsay evidence obtained through interrogation methods not permitted by Geneva was another blunder. The Army’s longstanding manual on interrogation, *FM 34-52*, points out that information gained under great physical duress is inherently suspect and unreliable.

Gitmo and its practices and procedures should be viewed not so much as crimes but as mistakes: counterproductive investments of time, energy, and effort that gave little to the U.S. in the long run except opprobrium and condemnation. And so we now have the result: *Boumediene v. Bush*, in some ways badly decided, in many ways properly dissented from, and yet ultimately correct. ■

William Ziegler is the pen name of an attorney who has studied and practiced both military and international law.

Bob Barr's Third Way

FOR THE FIRST TIME since the 2000 election, third-party candidates have an unusually receptive audience of independent voters disgusted with Republicans and wary of the Democratic nominee. This gives former Georgia Congressman Bob Barr a chance to raise his party's profile by targeting states where disaffected voters are in abundance.

In the wake of Barack Obama's decision to support the "compromise" FISA legislation on warrantless wiretapping and telecom immunity, even civil libertarians on the Left may be drawn to Barr, who has made opposition to FISA, the PATRIOT Act, and the Iraq War major issues of his campaign.

Most media and polling attention has focused on Barr's effect on the results in his home state, and the Obama campaign has speculated that Barr and higher black turnout could flip Georgia into the Democratic column. But Barr supporters can rest easy if they are concerned about having a spoiler effect and aiding Obama's election. One Insider Advantage state poll did give Barr 6 percent and showed the major candidates effectively tied 44-43, but this shows Obama's ceiling as much as it reveals the potential for a strong showing by Barr.

The focus on Georgia has overshadowed similar states where Barr could draw many votes away from McCain without necessarily having a spoiler effect. While Barr's national polling tends to be no greater than 1-2 percent, and usually below that of independent candidate Ralph Nader, there is tremendous room for growth on a state-by-state level through a carefully targeted effort. The success of Barr's campaign will hinge on driving up vote counts in states where protest votes on the Right are unlikely to

affect the outcome, as this will remove an important psychological barrier to disaffected conservative voters casting third-party ballots. Despite the frequent, often misleading identification of the Mountain West as the most libertarian region of the country, the best chances for the Libertarians are in the South and the old border states, where McCain's base is broad but weak and local Democrats remain disenchanted with their national standard-bearer.

West Virginia is particularly rich in voters repelled by the major-party candidates and could respond favorably to the combination of Barr's socially conservative voting record, restrictionist credentials, and defense of civil liberties. According to Rasmussen Reports, 13 percent of West Virginians prefer an unnamed "other" candidate, including 14 percent of Democrats and 19 percent of independents. More importantly for Barr, many of these voters consider themselves conservatives: 13 percent of conservatives prefer an alternative candidate, and 4 percent remain undecided. This would be one of the best targets for a candidate whose campaign presupposes that the GOP has abandoned conservatives and libertarians and takes for granted that Obama is not the remedy we seek.

Arkansas and Kentucky may also prove to be fertile ground for Barr, as both have large numbers of conservative Democrats and independents interested in an alternative candidate. Meanwhile, 15 percent of Alabama's Democrats opt for an alternative, and 12 percent of Louisiana's independents prefer a third option. The only Western state that shows similar levels of third-party interest is Utah, where 13 percent of independents and 10 percent of conservatives want someone other than McCain

and Obama. Nevada, home state of the Libertarians' vice presidential nominee, Wayne Allyn Root, also offers some prospects, but its voters fall into slightly more predictable patterns of support for the major parties.

The greatest hurdle Barr may face in winning over discontented conservatives and libertarians is the temptation to vote for Obama to punish Republicans. For Barr to increase Libertarian vote totals across the country, he has to seem like a credible alternative but not a credible electoral threat, while those on the Right inclined to take a punitive approach are attracted to Obama most of all because of his ability to inflict defeat on a party they have come to loathe. Whether as a protest or a means of pulling the debate back toward the right, a vote for Barr sends a coherent message, while Obamacon votes will be as indecipherable as their justifications for voting this way have been.

Barr will need to work to persuade conservatives and libertarians drawn to Obama that voting Libertarian makes a coherent political statement that represents their views and their reasons for breaking with the GOP. As Obama's latest cynical move on FISA should show them, they cannot expect Obama to challenge or reverse unconstitutional acts of the executive branch. Instead, they should put aside the desire for revenge and vote their interests.

Ironically, the political relevance of the Libertarian Party will depend on it having no clear role in electing a Democrat to the White House. In order for a 2008 protest to build a foundation for future Libertarian political strength, the impact of a Barr candidacy on the outcome will need to be minimal—and its impact on the debate will need to be great. ■

The Last Rockefeller

Conservatives wanted to take the Republican Party from moderates.
Now moderates are giving the majority to Democrats.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

CHRIS SHAYS is the last Republican member of the House from New England. He is also a nice guy. “My opponents will say, ‘He’s a nice guy and he’s good on the environment, but I’ll be better,’” Shays suggests. That’s exactly what they say. George Jepson, the former chairman of Ned Lamont’s anti-war primary campaign against Joe Lieberman and a longtime Shays foe, concedes, “He’s built up a lot of goodwill in the community. He shows up for everything.” One top aide of Shays’s current electoral opponent admits, “I really like Chris Shays” and repeats, “he’s just a really nice guy.” These are the men who want to put him out of a job.

Shays is a moderate Republican—something he advertises at every opportunity. Constituents who visit his Congressional office receive packets graphing his presidential support: Shays only voted with the president 33 percent of the time over the last year and 50 percent the year before that. Conservatives have branded him a RINO—a Republican in Name Only. But given the reputation of conservatism in the Northeast after two terms of Bush, “moderate” functions as a synonym for “sane.”

Shays has to be a sane Republican: the Connecticut district he has represented since 1987 is as moderate and nice as he is. It includes famously wealthy New York City suburbs like Greenwich—known as “Wall Street by the Sea”—the tony cul-de-sacs of Ridgefield and Darien, and the hip arts and

crafts enclaves in Westport. The *Almanac of American Politics* names it “the richest district in the richest state in the country.” When Bush and the Iraq War became unpopular, this GOP safe seat was nearly taken by Democrat Diane Farrell in two extremely tight contests. Shays won by just 3 points in 2006.

The district and the state continue to swing to the Democrats, and now they have recruited business executive Jim Himes to finish what Farrell started. He has already raised more money than any previous Shays opponent—over \$1 million before the state convention. Jepsen met him during the 2004 election cycle and saw in him a near-perfect candidate for the fourth district: “He’s quite modest, self-effacing, very accomplished, an impressive guy.” At 41, Himes is like a young Chris Shays: bright, practical, wonkish, moderate, and nice. *CQ Politics* has changed the race from “lean Republican” to “toss up.”

Few conservatives would shed a tear if a squish like Shays lost his seat. After all, driving Rockefeller Republicans like him out of power then out of the party has been a goal of the conservative movement for over 40 years. These yes-men to the liberal establishment were budget busters prone to proposing ad-hoc solutions divorced from principles. They wanted to make government programs run more efficiently, but not necessarily cut them. They were socially liberal. And as liberal internationalists,

they tended to be the most hawkish members of their party, supporting the disastrous wars that Democrats started.

But conservatives are not replacing the Shayses of the world with their own upstarts. Instead, they are driving moderate candidates and constituents—the capstone of a long-term majority—to the Democrats.

When the Gingrich majority stormed the Capitol in 1994 with the “Contract With America” raised aloft, the final exorcism of Rockefeller’s ghost seemed possible. The South had finally realigned behind the GOP, trading in conservative Democrats for conservative Republicans. The new majority retained laissez-faire rhetoric, showed flashes of non-interventionism when they opposed Clinton’s actions overseas, and championed a combative, polarizing style of politics. They forced a Democratic president to sign welfare reform. This ideological shift to the Right and stylistic shift toward activism and conflict would inevitably put pressure on GOP moderates—especially in the Northeast.

New York’s Congressional delegation had 14 Republicans in 1994, but only six in the last session of Congress. Republicans lost moderate David Levy, first to conservative Daniel Frisa, but ultimately to Democrat Carolyn McCarthy in 1998. Sue Kelly was replaced by antiwar folk-singer John Hall in 2006. Republicans held both of New Hampshire’s House seats in 1995; now they belong to Democrats. In 2001, Vermont’s Jim

Jeffords, long out of step with the conservative direction of his party, renounced his GOP membership to caucus with the Democrats.

Shays also feels the weight of his party affiliation. When he was engaged in a tough re-election campaign in which the Iraq War was the top issue, his Republican colleagues unveiled "The America Values Agenda," a battery of items that included removing the federal courts' jurisdiction to hear cases on the Pledge of Allegiance and promoting a Constitutional amendment to prohibit flag burning. Shays told the *New York Times*, "It was stupid and gross. ... They have this obsession to satisfy conservative Republicans who will probably be re-elected no matter what happens.

IRONICALLY, THE **CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT**, UNDER BUSH, HAS BECOME MUCH MORE LIKE ITS **OLD ROCKEFELLER FOES**.

They get job satisfaction, but they are making it more difficult for me to win my race." He says that his constituents would "approach me and ask, 'While Rome is burning, your party wants to push a constitutional amendment? Why should we re-elect Republicans?' I didn't have an answer."

Shays has long positioned himself as a skeptic of the conservative movement—cordial but gently critical. He speaks warmly of his relationship with one of his constituents, the founder of the modern conservative movement, the late William F. Buckley. Shays was an occasional dinner guest at Buckley's Stamford home, dining with the Kissingers or senior editors of *National Review*. "It was great fun, but I wasn't the intellectual," he recalls. "I couldn't make reference to what [Edmund] Burke said, but I could tell what I saw in my daily life." In these dinner debates, Shays tried to address Buckley in a

"practical and nonideological way. And once in a while I felt I stumped him."

Shays takes similar satisfaction in occasionally quieting his conservative colleagues on the Hill. When Republicans get excited about cutting government intervention into the economy and Shays deviates from his party's line, he says, "My more conservative colleagues come to me and lecture me. I ask, 'Did you vote for the Farm Bill?' and they know exactly what I'm talking about." The Farm Bill, Shays says is "the biggest market-intervention Congress does. We pay people not to farm. We pay others to farm too much." He prefers market solutions, but doesn't make a fetish of the free market. "I have a constitutional obligation to represent my district, not

just people who voted for me, but everyone," and "speaking for New Englanders, we want honest talk and aren't into ideology."

But ideology is a slippery thing. The English philosopher Michael Oakeshott defined conservatism as being anti-ideological, describing it instead as a temperament:

What others plausibly identify as timidity, [the conservative] recognizes in himself as rational prudence. ... He is cautious, and he is disposed to indicate his assent or dissent, not in absolute, but in graduated terms. He eyes the situation in terms of its propensity to disrupt the familiarity of the features of his world.

Shays's preference for "practical and non-ideological" solutions, his determination to represent the opinions of his district, and his preference for consen-

sus over conflict may alienate him from the conservative movement, but it reveals something of Oakeshott's conservative temperament. And in New England, Shays benefits from this approach to politics.

And ironically, the conservative movement, under Bush, has become much more like its old Rockefeller foes. Since 2001, the conservative majority has supported massive spending programs like the faith-based initiatives and huge entitlement expansion like the prescription drug benefit—both at odds with their stated principles. Under the guise of improving standards, they backed No Child Left Behind, a landmark expansion of the federal government's power in education. And in lock-step with their commander in chief, they supported the invasion and occupation of Iraq—the latest and most ruinous project of liberal internationalism since Vietnam. Who are the Rockefeller Republicans now?

Even as the GOP adopted the moderates' policies, it was taking on the radical spirit of a movement—the Rockefeller agenda without the appealing compensation of the conciliatory temperament. Democrats were thus left with an open field of voters who wanted competent government that relates to their everyday concerns. Michael Sacshe, Himes's communications director, says "Shays keeps going to Iraq trying to figure out what he did with his vote in 2003. We are focusing on the issues Connecticut cares about." The young Democrat wants to leave the crusades to Republicans. He promises instead to seek a seat on the Transportation Committee, hoping to update the New Haven line's rail stock. He also wants to focus on creating more affordable housing throughout the district so that people no longer have to commute from Stratford to Greenwich, causing even more congestion on I-95.

Because of the misgovernance of the conservative majority, Republicans have lost their traditional advantages on fiscal constraint and reliable defense. Shays's own party, and the movement that animates it today, are weighing on him like a millstone. Unable to punish red-state congressmen, Shays's "nonideological" New Englanders have been exacting their revenge on conservatives by taking out their moderate party allies.

Lincoln Chaffee, the Rhode Island liberal Republican who lost his Senate seat, complained that people voted against him just to end the Republican majority. Nancy Johnson, a moderate Republican representative from a district neighboring Shays's, remained popular for two decades until voters suddenly dropped her in 2006.

In May, retiring moderate Tom Davis warned, if the Republican Party "were a dog food they would have to take us off the shelves." Davis wrote that the best thing the party could do was let independents like Chris Shays "define their own brand" in 2008. John McKinney, Connecticut Senate minority leader and a friend of Shays, confirms the danger for the GOP in New England. He says, "When I talk to almost anyone under 35, they can't even conceive of being a Republican." Worse, McKinney continues, "when I tell them what I believe—fiscal discipline and limited government—they ask me, 'Then why are you a Republican?'"

Himes even threatens to capitalize on conservative dissatisfaction with

Republicans. The former Goldman Sachs executive promises to clean up Washington's profligate ways. Campaigning on economic issues may seem an odd choice for a district where the median income is over \$66,500. But in an era when a Republican president proposed the largest federal budget ever, then doubled it, words like "fiscal responsibility" come easily to young Democrats. Jepsen smiles and says, "It's good for job-making and good for the Democratic Party that we have candidates who are comfortable with the business community."

Himes can also frame his position on the war as sensible and moderate. In 2006, Shays became the first Republican to propose a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq. He was pilloried by conservatives and hailed by moderates. But he never voted for the timetables that were proposed and came to support the surge. Shays now links his position to John McCain, saying that he criticized the president when the strategy was failing but is able to recognize progress on the ground. This allows Himes to parody Shays's position as "for a timetable, something like John McCain's 100 years."

By preaching a message that deficits matter and touting a prudent foreign policy, Himes is taking ideological ground that Republicans have vacated. And he is not the only Democrat capturing old Republican issues. In 2004, Howard Dean told Democrats that they would have to compete in every state to

build a new majority. With the help of Rahm Emmanuel, the party began recruiting its own moderates. In the South, Heath Schuler appealed to border restrictionists; in heavily Catholic Pennsylvania, Bob Casey Jr. won his Senate seat running as a nominally pro-life Democrat. In Himes, the Connecticut party has found a fiscally conservative Democrat who is as comfortable speaking to the resident CEO's as he is to recent immigrants.

Conservative Republicans shouldn't console themselves that a moderate Democrat is just as useful (or useless) as a moderate Republican. A Chris Shays may occasionally infuriate conservatives, but he still votes with Republicans about two-thirds of the time. The same will not be true of Jim Himes.

Republicans, now relegated to minority status in the House, are in no position to throw their moderate colleagues out. There is no danger that the Rockefeller wing will threaten the supremacy of conservatives within the party, as they did in the 1960s. They are a small group that traditionally wins in blue-blooded regions where red-blooded conservatives cannot. And without some appeal to the center, Republicans may become a regional party, ideologically cohesive but permanently out of power. "I do best," says Shays, "and my party does best when we reach people in the center and move them to the right. If we try to be far-right and grab people, we lose."

Voters in Connecticut still like Chris Shays, but sometimes nice guys lose. Under Bush, movement conservatives adopted the worst traits of Rockefeller Republicans, then magnified them with their pugnacious style. By doing so, they have nearly succeeded in ridding their party of the likes of Shays. But instead of pulling the party to the right while maintaining a majority, they are pushing moderate constituents—and the majority they can grant—to the Democrats. ■

Daniel Larison

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Steve Sailer, isteve.blogspot.com

Reverend Right

Chuck Baldwin hopes to continue the Ron Paul Revolution.

By W. James Antle III

WITH HIS CONSERVATIVE SUITS and light-rimmed spectacles, Chuck Baldwin looks more like a Baptist preacher than a presidential candidate. In fact, he is both. He is also the host of the radio talk show “Chuck Baldwin Live” and columnist for such popular websites as WorldNetDaily and VDARE. Since clinching the Constitution Party’s nomination in Kansas City this spring, Baldwin has been trying to add another line to his résumé: John McCain’s worst nightmare.

“We’re seeing a lot of dissatisfaction with the two major parties,” Baldwin says, citing a Rasmussen poll that shows 58 percent of the American people would consider voting for a third party. “I’m hearing from many conservatives that they’re not going to hold their nose and vote for John McCain this year.” He is similarly critical of President George W. Bush and the Republicans in Congress: “They had the entire government but not only did they do nothing to promote the true agenda of conservatism, in practicality, they did the opposite.”

There is one notable exception to Baldwin’s indictment of GOP elected officials: Congressman Ron Paul of Texas. “I was very supportive of Ron’s campaign in the primaries,” he says. “I campaigned for him personally. I believe I am the only presidential candidate who did that.” Paul’s ardent grassroots following raised millions of dollars and helped him collect over 1.2 million votes in his long-shot presidential campaign. Baldwin hopes to be their man in November.

He may seem an unlikely revolutionary, but his views and the Constitution Party’s platform bear more than a passing resemblance to Paul’s: unapologetically pro-life, opposed to amnesty for illegal immigrants and trade agreements that compromise American sovereignty, in favor of getting out of both the United Nations and the 16th Amendment (replacing the income tax with nothing), and strictly limiting the federal government to its enumerated powers. The Constitution Party also advocates a non-interventionist foreign policy, regarding all undeclared wars as unconstitutional and the Iraq War in particular as ill advised. It’s hard to imagine a stronger contrast with McCain, for whom the Bush tax cuts were too much, the Iraq War not enough, and amnesty just right.

The foreign-policy planks of the platform survived a challenge at the Constitution Party’s national convention in April. For a brief time, the party’s only declared presidential candidate was perennial GOP office-seeker Alan Keyes. While Keyes’s past forays into electoral politics had ended badly—his 2008 Republican presidential candidacy was a bigger disaster than his 2004 Illinois Senate race against Barack Obama—some Constitutionlists were tempted to nominate him anyway. Keyes was a prominent Republican defector and would have been the biggest name ever to grace the Constitution Party’s presidential ticket. He is a popular speaker on the pro-life circuit and could potentially siphon a large number of Christian conservative votes away from McCain.

Unfortunately, there was one major problem: Keyes supported a continued U.S. military presence in Iraq and otherwise disagreed with the party on foreign policy. He was also characteristically determined to show his new party the error of its ways. One by one, other relatively well-known candidates like “Ten Commandments Judge” Roy Moore and conservative author Jerome Corsi decided to pass on the race. Baldwin was a reluctant candidate, but he campaigned as an antiwar conservative and full-throated supporter of the party’s platform.

Here Ron Paul enters the picture once again. Although Keyes’s ability to win an unprecedented amount of support for the Constitution Party was highly questionable—his GOP primary vote totals tumbled from just over 1 million in 2000 to about 60,000 this year—he was nevertheless an attractive prospect for some members of a small party that has never broken 200,000 votes nationally. But delegates opposed to Keyes’s nomination, including party founder Howard Phillips, countered by citing Paul’s fundraising success and Internet popularity—clearly, they argued, there was a large audience for antiwar conservatism, even if it had to be represented by a lesser-known candidate. Baldwin ended up winning the nomination with 74 percent of the vote, stunning Keyes and his supporters.

Though far from a celebrity, Baldwin isn’t a stranger in conservative Christian circles. The founder and pastor of Crossroad Baptist Church in Pensacola, he

received his bachelor's degree from Jerry Falwell's Liberty University and served as state chairman of the Moral Majority in Florida. The Constitution Party nominated him for vice president on a ticket headed by Michael Peroutka in 2004. "He was a great contribution to my campaign, and I think he is very qualified to be president," says Peroutka. "Chuck Baldwin understands the American view of law and government. He's constitutionally literate and has actually read the Constitution, unlike his opponents." Former senator Bob Smith, who represented New Hampshire for two terms as a Republican, hasn't endorsed anyone in the 2008 race but admires Baldwin. "I do like him and share most of his conservative and constitutional principles," he says.

IN CALIFORNIA, THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN OF THE AMERICAN INDEPENDENT PARTY HAS BEEN TRYING TO **LIST KEYES AS THE NOMINEE RATHER THAN BALDWIN.**

The Paul movement and broader conservative discontent with the GOP give the Constitution Party a chance for its best election result yet. This year's race is the most favorable issue environment for a third-party challenge on the right since at least 1992, if not 1968. Behind the scenes, people who were active in organizing "money bombs" for Paul and bankrolling conservative causes are expressing interest in Baldwin. Students for Baldwin groups are beginning to crop up on college campuses. "The one at Louisiana State University, where I go to school, has over 250 members," says Baldwin's national youth coordinator, Trent Hill. He notes that organizing hasn't yet begun in earnest.

But Baldwin faces competition for the Paul vote. Libertarian Party nominee Bob Barr, a former Republican congressman, has much higher name recognition and is actually registering in major polls. Baldwin can claim greater ideological

purity—unlike Barr, he opposed the war and the PATRIOT Act from the beginning—but he will have a harder time acquiring state ballot access and gaining national media coverage. While all third parties attract oddballs, Barr has done a much better job than Baldwin of distancing himself from his party's fringe. Congressman Paul has not endorsed a presidential candidate yet, though he has hinted a vote for either Barr or Baldwin would be fine with him. "I'm glad Bob is in the race," says Baldwin, who argues it is a sign that there are "others vying for our message."

Internal battles have also roiled the Constitution Party. Originally founded in 1991 as the U.S. Taxpayers Party, it is actually a federation of right-wing state

parties. In 2006, affiliates in Nevada, Idaho, and Colorado ran candidates who favored legal abortion in cases of rape, incest, and when the mother's life is at stake. No-exceptions pro-lifers tried unsuccessfully to have these states disaffiliated from the national party. When this failed, nine state parties led by stringent pro-lifers disaffiliated, though in some of these states they have reorganized and re-affiliated. "The Constitution Party itself is struggling," says Peroutka. In California, the outgoing chairman of the American Independent Party has been trying to list Keyes as the nominee rather than Baldwin.

Small disagreements can result in serious ruptures because Constitution Party leaders spend more time focusing on first principles than political strategy. At times they seem to think strategy is unnecessary. Baldwin quotes John Quincy Adams, "Duty is ours, results are God's." Peroutka sounds a similar

theme: "When people would tell me I didn't have a chance, I'd say I don't believe in chance. I believe in Divine Providence." The party has contested four presidential elections and never won more than 185,000 votes (Howard Phillips in 1996).

That said, the Baldwin camp isn't leaving everything up to divine intervention. They have been studying the electoral map, making plans to campaign heavily in large states like California and Michigan as well as states with a substantial Paul vote, like Idaho and Montana. In the last state, a Constitution Party member, Rick Jore, holds the balance of power in the House of Representatives. But a major part of the Baldwin strategy amounts to offering anti-McCain conservatives, who are not insignificant in number, a principled alternative.

Baldwin and his supporters appreciate the formidable obstacles. They realize they will face something close to a media blackout—the candidate describes the press as having a "death grip" over political debate—which they hope to counter with the Internet. They also understand that much of the coverage they do get will be hostile. Asked if he has any advice for his former running mate, Peroutka laughs, "He'll need a thick skin!"

"After four years of broken promises, abandoning historic conservatism, and betraying their 2000 platform," Baldwin contends, "there is no future for conservatives and constitutionalists in the Republican Party." The future, he argues, belongs to mavericks like Paul and third-party movements like the Constitution Party. "This could be our breakout year," he says. "It won't be because of me. I think our message is special." This modest assessment sounds very much like the Texas doctor Baldwin hopes to emulate. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of The American Spectator.

Meet the Establishment

The titans of media, business, and politics gather to congratulate themselves on allowing a boy from Buffalo into their company.

By Nicholas von Hoffman

Reporters tend to be absorbed by the bureaucracies they cover; they take on the habits, attitudes, and even accents of the military or the diplomatic corps. Should a reporter resist the pressure, there are many ways to get rid of him. ... But a reporter covering the whole capital on his own—particularly if he is his own employer—is immune from these pressures.

— I.F. Stone

IF THE SUSPICIONS about “the media” needed confirmation, the days of public mourning for Tim Russert dispelled any doubts. Seldom has there been a more public demonstration of the oneness of those reported on with those doing the reporting. Government, money, status, power, and media appeared indissolubly united on the nation’s TV screens.

The *Washington Post* observed that Russert’s leave-taking was “the closest thing to a state funeral this town has seen since the deaths of Presidents Reagan and Ford.” The outpouring by Washington’s mightiest at the various funereal events for the NBC executive has no parallel, or at least none that comes readily to mind. Private persons of the greatest distinction do not get the kind of send-off accorded Tim Russert.

The 1965 funeral of Edward R. Murrow, surely the giant of broadcast journalism, took place in something close to obscurity when laid against the Russert obsequies. No presidents, no mayors, and certainly nothing like the

week of high-society, big-time corporate crepe-hanging to which the nation was treated last month. The burial rites given to Tim Russert are a case study for political anthropology.

The newsman did not lie in state in the Capitol Rotunda, but President and Mrs. Bush, bearing a bouquet of yellow and orange roses, were among the first to arrive at his wake at St. Albans School, an upper-crust establishment for the instruction of the wealthy young. Next came the “private” funeral Mass at Georgetown’s Holy Trinity church, where a Roman Catholic cardinal gave the homily. Outside, the circulation of the surrounding streets was clotted by tangles of black limousines and monster SUV’s.

In attendance, among others, were the secretary of state and the two men running for president. John McCain explained to reporters that Russert had been “the pre-eminent political journalist of his generation,” a statement that might have startled Bob Woodward, who is still at the *Washington Post* and is seven years older than Russert. Not to be outdone by McCain, Barack Obama told the journalists outside Holy Trinity, “I am grief-stricken with loss”—a surprise to many who did not know they were close.

The climacteric was a memorial service at the Kennedy Center, arranged by Campbell Peachey and Associates, one of Washington’s toniest event planners. Two thousand media stars, politicians of both parties and all persuasions, and

paragraphs full of famous names made the audience appear to be taking part in what the *New York Times* called “an enormously special edition of the program he moderated, ‘Meet the Press.’”

All this was capped off by the third of “the Russert miracles,” as *Newsweek* had it. In the interest of good taste we shall skip the first two and go to the third “‘miracle’ [which] took place as the crowd moved to the rooftop for a reception. The sun returned after a light, fast summer rainstorm and the sky opened to a rainbow extending from one end of the Kennedy Center to the other... ‘After the magical experience of this service, to come out and see the rainbow ... made the last dry eye weep,’ said NBC News executive Phil Griffin. The last song in the memorial service was, fittingly, ‘Somewhere over the Rainbow,’” quoth *Newsweek*.

Such a star-studded dirge—so out of proportion to Russert’s place in the history of journalism—is cause to ponder: why the outburst? Doubtless Russert was a good man who did many a good turn, and, sure, NBC’s public-relations people saw an opportunity to push the brand, as we say nowadays, while giving a decent guy a royal send-off, but the rest of broadcast and print journalism, unaffiliated with General Electric, also opened the sluice gates of sentimentality.

Who Russert was and what Washington journalism may have become was caught by the *New York Times*’s Mark Leibovich when he wrote:

One of my enduring images of Mr. Russert was at a 60th birthday party for 'Meet the Press' last November. ... It was one of those lots-of-famous-people affairs in which those who had been guests of 'Meet the Press' were delineated by special blue ribbons on their lapels—a kind of varsity letter to signify high standing in the chattering class. There was a long and snaking receiving line at the front that ended with Mr. Russert himself. It had the strange vibe of people waiting in line to pay respects to the king ...

The full week of self-involved bereavement for the king provided a glimpse of the intertwining of Washington's top-drawer media, politicians, multimillionaire lawyers, lobbyists, and fixers. In mourning Russert, they were able to use the moment to sing a solemn song of self-praise.

A salient aspect of Russert's obituaries, broadcast and print, was the description of the cloudless life of a journalist who made no enemies, fought no battles, and suffered no reverses. When William F. Buckley, also a man of a thousand kindnesses, died earlier this year, the obituaries were laudatory, even affectionate, but they did not omit the controversies that were part of his life. Buckley, a giant figure in print and broadcast journalism, whose career dwarfed Russert's, had a big funeral in New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral, but it was nothing compared to the "Meet the Press" anchor's send-off.

The farewells to Russert mentioned how the son of a Buffalo garbage collector had died a multimillionaire, thanks to his hosting of a popular political TV talk show. It was as though TV news was using Russert to extol the quality and prosperity of the industry, though neither is any longer in good health.

Since 1980, shortly before Russert joined NBC, the network has lost more than half of its news viewers, though its executives can console themselves that in the same period CBS has seen two-thirds of its audience vanish. Broadcast journalism is dying more slowly than print journalism, for which the situation is verging on the catastrophic, but the adulation offered Tim Russert, a man who made his reputation sitting on camera questioning politicians, shows how expensive, on-the-scene reporting has given way to the low-cost presentation of talking heads.

In the not too distant past, moderating roundtables or doing what Charlie Rose does would not have been thought of as journalism—not real journalism. But definitions change. A hundred years

of Defense to pipe the Pentagon's tune about the war in Iraq. The *New York Times*, which broke the story, reported that "the Pentagon recruited more than 75 retired officers. ... The largest contingent was affiliated with Fox News, followed by NBC and CNN..."

Whether NBC and Russert were duped or knowingly lent the network to the government for propaganda is an open question. What is certain is that, although journalists customarily make it a point of honor to answer other journalists' questions, on this occasion Russert and the network clammed up.

The mourning ceremonies for Russert offered a window on Washington, where the crosshatching of journalism, politics, and commerce is so fine that the boundaries are inscrutable. Those who live in

THE ADULATION OFFERED TIM RUSSERT, A MAN WHO **MADE HIS REPUTATION** SITTING ON CAMERA **QUESTIONING POLITICIANS**, SHOWS HOW EXPENSIVE, ON-THE-SCENE REPORTING HAS GIVEN WAY TO THE **LOW-COST PRESENTATION** OF TALKING HEADS.

ago our press heroes were men like Richard Harding Davis and Lowell Thomas, adventuresome reporters who made up in daring what they may have lacked in accuracy.

The kind of journalism that made Russert famous is perhaps the only kind commercial outlets can afford. Most investigative reporting today is paid for by nonprofit groups supported by foundation grants. The June issue of *Wired* predicted the coming financial collapse of the Associated Press, the single largest employer of reporters, and suggested that Google ought to buy it.

Amid the flood of encomia marking Russert's passing, more detached obituary writers might have questioned his role as NBC Washington bureau chief in the scandal involving military analysts being planted on air by the Department

the capital pass from one sphere to the other as Russert did. How that molds and determines what we learn about politics is something that may not be known until the historians get to work, assuming the e-mails have not been destroyed.

If Tim Russert, who got along with everybody and was well thought of by all, is gone, Seymour Hersh, who we can thank for exposing the My Lai massacre and much of the Abu Ghraib story, is still with us. It will be more than a passing comment on the state of journalism when the world notes who turns up at his funeral. ■

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[Wall-E]

When Humans Wasted Away

By Steve Sailer

DESPITE ITS MISANTHROPY, the superbly crafted dystopian science-fiction film “Wall-E” will be the ninth straight movie from Pixar Animation Studios, going back to “Toy Story,” to earn at least \$162 million at the American box office.

“Wall-E” is stronger on execution than originality. Writer-director Andrew Stanton (“Finding Nemo”) sets loose a squatter version of the cute robot from the 1986 comedy “Short Circuit” in the dystopic consumerist wasteland of Mike Judge’s suppressed 2006 satire “Idiocracy.” Indeed, Stanton’s vision of a smoggy, trash-strewn Earth resembles a big-budget remake of Judge’s cult classic. With its ostensibly environmentalist message, however, “Wall-E” won’t suffer the fate of Judge’s politically radioactive story about the long-run consequences of low fertility among the highly intelligent.

In 2110, the monolithic corporate monopolist Buy ‘n’ Large uses the jingle “Too much garbage in your face? There’s plenty of space out in space” to induce humanity to abandon the planet. All humans set sail on a luxury cruise aboard a colossal spaceship, leaving Earth temporarily to a race of trash-compactor automatons (“Waste Allocation Load Lifter Earth-class”) programmed to

build towering ziggurats out of cubes of compressed junk. The detritus of consumerism proves too much, though, and Earth remains a lifeless ruin.

Now, 700 years later, just one Wall-E is still puttering along, alone except for his pet cockroach. This curious little robot brings home and carefully sorts elegiac objects that catch his fancy, such as a Rubik’s Cube. The Aspergery Wall-E can’t decide whether a plastic spork belongs with his spoons or his forks, so he deposits it exactly between the two piles. His prized possession is a videotape of “Hello, Dolly,” which he watches repeatedly, wishing he had somebody to hold hands with.

The first half of “Wall-E” contains almost no dialogue. This is not unprecedented in a kid’s movie—the staggeringly gorgeous 1979 hit “The Black Stallion” was similar. Stanton feels that audiences want to work for their entertainment, so he has high expectations for what they can handle. Restricting verbiage prods him to new levels of inventiveness in conveying emotion visually. He devises what his mentor, the screenwriting guru Robert McKee (played by Brian Cox in “Adaptation”) calls “worlds we’ve never seen but a humanity we all recognize.”

Reviewers rave over how Stanton gets us to recognize emotions in a machine. Still, although Pixar is immensely skillful, people naturally perceive personality in anything self-activated. My wife, for instance, fusses maternally over her Roomba robot vacuum cleaner, grooming it lovingly when its sprockets clog, which is often. She treats it as if he (we instantly decided Roomba is a boy) is a dutiful, though inept, family retainer.

“Wall-E” doesn’t actually peddle an environmentalist message. The real

fear it plays upon is not that we’ll run out of room to dump our trash outdoors. After all, Los Angeles County alone has enough cubic miles of uninhabited canyons to hold the world’s trash. The 1990s media panic about a purported landfill shortage was launched by trash-hauling companies desiring higher fees. Instead, “Wall-E” describes a more pressing modern American fear—that we’ll run out of room indoors to store all the crud we keep buying. Today’s eco-mania, in contrast, is about saving the Earth through shopping—not less often, but more fashionably.

Wall-E’s lonely vigil is interrupted when an automated spaceship touches down to unload a beautiful futuristic robot named Eve, who occasionally giggles like a Japanese schoolgirl. Her mission is to search for any signs of plant life on Earth, in the hope that humans can then begin to recolonize the planet. She first tries to fry Wall-E with her laser, then ignores him because he’s mineral not vegetable. He finally wins her approbation by handing her the only plant growing on Earth.

The movie acts out a classic nerd’s fantasy—to be left alone with cool stuff ... and a sleek girlfriend. (And if she’s a Japanese robot, so much the cooler.)

The rocket returns to haul Eve back to the spaceliner, and the smitten Wall-E hitches a ride. Onboard, “Wall-E” turns into a different, more cartoonish movie, with a cruder look and a frenetically unexciting chase scene. It’s still “Idiocratic” though—in 700 years, humans have devolved into boneless wonders, obese blobs who never look up from their screens. How much fiction is there in this science fiction? ■

Rated G.

BOOKS

[*The Post-American World*,
Fareed Zakaria, W.W. Norton and
Co., 288 pages]

Rise of the Rest

By Geoffery Wheatcroft

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, the English were much concerned by the question of national decline. The British Empire had reached its apogee by the end of the 19th century, which was also the end of Queen Victoria's reign. It is sometimes supposed that this, and the inevitable decline on the other side of that peak, can only have been visible in hindsight. In fact, the great bard of empire, Rudyard Kipling, saw ahead very clearly at the time.

In 1897, the year of the Queen-Empress's Diamond Jubilee, he wrote "Recessional" as a warning against imperial hubris. He noted what happens to those "drunk with sight of power" who succumb to "frantic boast and foolish word," lines that Americans could study with profit even now. Two years later, he wrote "The White Man's Burden," whose subtitle is often forgotten: "The United States and the Philippine Islands." Kipling realized, as not all his countrymen did, that the American Republic, which in the generation after the Civil War had already outstripped England from population to steel production—though not yet in foreign trade—would before long enter the world stage.

While he welcomed the arrival of America as a potential Great Power and imperial helpmeet, he wanted Americans to know the great weight of this burden, in words which likewise should have been read out in Congress before the invasion of Iraq:

And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

When the Americans took on their new role, Kipling warned, they would reap the old reward, "The blame of those ye better / The hate of those ye guard."

As we enter a new century, it is the turn of the Americans—having taken up many burdens, reached their own zenith of power, seen many hopes brought to nought, and duly earned the hate of those they thought they were guarding—to worry about their own imminent decline or what many envisage as such. The 19th century was the European century, the 20th century was the American century, and the 21st century is going to be the Asian century, is it not?

This is the question Fareed Zakaria addresses in his stimulating and well-informed, if sometimes rather breezy, new book *The Post-American World*. Indian by birth, Zakaria came to the United States as a student and stayed to become a journalist. He is now editor of *Newsweek International* and is well equipped to interpret the outside world to an American audience. While addressing his adoptive country, Zakaria's concern is to calm some of their more overwrought fears about national demise: his book "is not about the decline of America but the rise of everyone else."

That rise is astonishing. Last year and the year before, 124 countries grew economically at more than 4 percent annually, an enormous rate by historical standards. Since 1981, people living in absolute poverty—conveniently defined as subsisting on a dollar a day or less—have fallen from 40 percent of the world's population to less than 18 percent. The world's tallest building is in Taipei—though it will soon be topped by another in Dubai—one of the richest men on earth is Mexican, and "even shopping, America's greatest sporting activity, has gone global. Of the top ten malls in the world, only one is in the United States; the world's biggest is in Beijing."

One might ask not why this is happening now but how it has not happened before: why has this huge awakening of China, India, and other Asian countries taken so long? The glib answer is that they were suppressed, exploited, and

held back by evil European imperialism. But Zakaria shows that this—like many such callow explanations—distorts the basic facts of chronology. Those Asian countries were falling behind the West, and to a large extent willfully withdrawing from the world, by the 15th and 16th centuries, when the age of empire had barely begun.

Even early last century, when England was still the global superpower with a vastly greater trade than China's, the Chinese economic product was larger than the British. But then, as Zakaria points out, total "GDP is highly misleading as an indicator, compared with per capita income and economic growth." In the six centuries from 1350 to 1950, per capita product increased almost sixfold in Western Europe, while barely increasing at all in China and India. That needs explaining, and—citing Daniel Patrick Moynihan's "central conservative truth" that culture, not politics, determines the success of a society—Zakaria looks a little gingerly at the oft-made argument that Hindu culture or Confucianism was inimical to progress and modernity.

There is no simple explanation for the Asian economic explosion of the past generation. Mao's abominable tyranny well nigh destroyed China economically. But he thus left it almost a *tabula rasa* for his successors to conduct another experiment, less bloody though far from merely admirable. China today has a political economy that sometimes seems to combine the worst features of communism and capitalism and has certainly had very damaging social, environmental, and cultural consequences.

When I read that China made 200 air conditioners in 1978 and 28 million in 2005, I think of the destruction of Peking—or Beijing if we must—by all accounts a very beautiful city not many years ago but now a hideous wilderness of skyscrapers. The English architect Norman Foster is quoted as saying irritably that, in the time it took for the public to review just one new building at Heathrow, in London, he will have built the entire new airport at Beijing, which is larger than all of Heathrow's terminals

combined. What a terrible nuisance democracy is when it impedes the totalitarian impulse of modern architects from Le Corbusier onward.

But does that mean, as many Americans now apprehend, that China represents a grave or even mortal threat to the West and especially the United States? Zakaria gives good reasons for thinking the threat much exaggerated: American military might is, and will remain for any foreseeable future, enormously greater than that of China or any combination of Asian powers, and there are further inherent strengths enjoyed by the United States, as well as by other former British colonies.

Although he has few illusions about his native country, Zakaria sees that India has real advantages over China. The educational system may be flawed and inadequate; at one time most Indian technology graduates migrated to America. The political culture may be stained by corruption or worse: "Nearly a fifth of the members of the Indian parliament have been accused of crimes, including embezzlement, rape and murder." Yet India still enjoys certain irreducible benefits that China does not, from the English language to limited constitutional government and a free press.

And then, for America, there is also the immense hegemonic "soft power," which is conferred by everything from its universities—far and away the world's best—to popular culture. "If I could control Hollywood I could control the world," Stalin said, which was, like other of the old monster's apothegms ("How many divisions has the Pope?"), a fascinating half-truth. It is quite possible to lap up American culture while being consumed with hatred of the society that produced it, as we regularly learn, but it is still to America's benefit that so many people want to look and sound American.

There are a few slips in *The Post-American World*, not necessarily significant. A letter, for example, responding to the East India Company's new educational policy written in 1823 could scarcely have been addressed "to Britain's prime minister, William Pitt," who died in 1806.

More importantly, Zakaria does not succumb to the materialist fallacy that distorts so much facile American commentary: everyone consumes American culture, therefore the world must be flat and in the end we will all live at peace under benevolent American tutelage. Zakaria sees through that. He examines the new rise of nationalism, as well as other ideologies that have so disconcerted progressive opinion. He quotes Zbigniew Brzezinski on the "global political awakening" that poses a challenge to existing states and especially to the global hierarchy "on top of which America still perches."

If we look back to Victoria's Jubilee and Kipling's "Recessional," we may well agree with Zakaria. He quite rightly says that the wonder is not so much that Great Britain declined but that it lasted so long, a point too rarely made. Quite apart from the sheer improbability of a small island off the shore of northwestern Europe becoming the greatest power on earth, it was extraordinary not that England was so beleaguered in 1940 but that she emerged victorious (as part of a vaster coalition) five years later. Zakaria adds that to understand how the British played a hand that was steadily weaker over time "might help illuminate America's path forward."

Without question, the dominance the United States has enjoyed since 1945 will fade away. It's already happening in manufacturing terms. The still more striking American imperium since 1991—what Zakaria calls "a unique, unipolar world in which the global economy has expanded and accelerated dramatically"—is receding. That does not mean, however, that the West is doomed or that the United States must become an impotent backwater. The future will depend not only on material strength but on political wisdom and moral resolution—and the humility that looks beyond frantic boast and foolish word. ■

Geoffrey Wheatcroft is a journalist and the author of The Strange Death of Tory England and Yo, Blair!

[Who's Your City?: How the Creative Economy Is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life, Richard Florida, Basic Books, 384 pages]

In the Valley of the Geeks

By Steve Sailer

IF YOU ARE A NONFICTION writer whose name isn't Barack Obama, you probably aren't going to get rich off serious books. Instead, the two likeliest ways to cash in are by speaking at corporate and government gatherings or by penning a self-help book.

Richard Florida, a professor of something called "Business and Creativity" at the University of Toronto, has made a pile on the lecture circuit flogging to death his one big idea—that cities and companies must put "creative" people first—as detailed in his books *The Rise of the Creative Class*, *Cities and the Creative Class* and *The Flight of the Creative Class*. Notice a pattern here?

As a self-promoter, it doesn't hurt that Florida is a handsome, strapping fellow who looks like Hollywood leading man Aaron Eckhart, the smarmy tobacco lobbyist in "Thank You for Smoking," without the dimple. Florida might not be in *New Yorker* savant Malcolm Gladwell's price range as a convention keynote speaker, but he is said to command a \$35,000 fee.

He is now leveraging his brand by expanding into the self-help genre with *Who's Your City? How the Creative Economy Is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life*. If you can't decide whether to move to Portland or Austin, Florida has the book for you. (As you've no doubt noticed by now, it's hard to write lucidly about Florida's theories because he shares his last name with an important location, which snarls everything up. I will henceforth call him Dr. Vibrant, in honor of one of his favorite words.)

Who's Your City begins, sensibly enough, by debunking the "Death of Distance" theory promoted by *New York Times* sage Thomas Friedman in *The World Is Flat*. Where you live can have a huge influence on your career. You can't, say, write sitcoms unless you live in Los Angeles. They just won't hire you. And while you can write opinion journalism without living in New York or Washington, you'd be ill advised to try.

Instead, Dr. Vibrant emphasizes how a critical mass of creative talents sparks itself to new heights. Although that is sometimes true—it can also just result in groupthink—a more cynical explanation for the economic advantage of living near your customers is that human beings tend to be nicer to people they meet frequently.

Dr. Vibrant is less willing to explore the main reason that real estate is so seldom brought up in American public discourse: intellectuals fear that if they mention in public what everybody is concerned about in private when looking for a place to live—the relationship between race, crime, and school quality—they'll wind up out of a job, like legendary biologist James Watson. Dr. V. is so avid for his honorariums that he only gingerly tiptoes to the edge of any topic that might get him Watsoned out of his speaking career. As a result, his book is infected with professionally cautious "advice" like this: "The quality and range of schools is certainly critical for parents of school-age children. ... You'll need to dig this information out yourself." Well, that was \$26.95 well spent.

When he's not intentionally unhelpful,

he's obtuse. For example, in *Who's Your City*, he reprints a popular map of America he put up on his blog in 2007, showing that the largest surpluses of extra single men are in Southwestern cities, near the Mexican border. Having had a year to think it over, Dr. Vibrant asserts, "The best ratio for heterosexual women was in greater Los Angeles, where single men outnumber single women by 40,000."

So if a bachelorette doesn't quite have the looks to land a husband in, say, Cincinnati, she should hightail it to L.A., where there's much less competition from attractive women. Yeah, right.

HE BUILT HIS SUCCESS ON TELLING **BUSINESS AND CIVIC LEADERS** THAT IF THEY WANT THEIR **DREARY LITTLE BURGHS** TO BECOME THE **NEXT SILICON VALLEY**, THEY'LL NEED **A LOT OF HOMOSEXUALS**.

The obvious reason there are so many more single men than single women in the Southwest is that there are so many illegal alien males there. The kind of single women who buy hardcover advice books probably aren't that interested in a Mixtec-speaking drywall, but Dr. Vibrant ignores such potentially controversial topics.

He built his success on telling business and civic leaders that if they want their dreary little burghs to become the next Silicon Valley, they'll need a lot of homosexuals, like in San Francisco. He says, "Gays predict not only the concentration of high-tech industry, but also its growth ..."

His instant conventional wisdom is that making money is all about the Three T's: Tolerance, which attracts Talent, which invents Technology. That's why Silicon Valley got so rich: diversity. It's full of gays, artists, immigrants, and free-thinking bohemians.

Politicians and executives lap this stuff up. For example, after Dr. Vibrant spoke in non-vibrant Spokane, local big shots called for an official "Gay District" to attract his "creative class." Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm invited him to instruct 1,300 community leaders as the centerpiece of her "Cool Cities Summit."

Why do the Dunder Mifflins of America pay him to lecture them on creativity and tolerance? Mostly, it makes them feel hip. Also, the legal staff can feel confident that their hired speaker won't slip up and say something that a disgruntled worker could use in a discrimination lawsuit. Judging from the chapter entitled "Where the Brains Are," Dr. Vibrant can ramble on about risky topics such as intelligence distribution without legal peril.

In contrast, if a firm hires as a speaker a distinguished social scientist who actually knows what he is talking about when it comes to measuring talent, such

as Charles Murray (co-author of *The Bell Curve*), the CEO would probably wind up on Rev. Al Sharpton's radio show, begging for absolution by promising vast new affirmative-action initiatives.

America isn't Canada, where the leading newsweekly, *Maclean's*, was put on trial for running a Mark Steyn article on Islam—at least not yet. Still, fear of discrimination lawsuits has had a definite "chilling effect" on who gets paid for being a public intellectual.

Furthermore, there's no market for reality checks. Dr. Vibrant's career as a celebrity academic is based on an example—Silicon Valley and gays—that a few seconds reflection would debunk. His correlation only exists because he's calling San Francisco and Silicon Valley the same place, even though 33 miles separate Castro Street in San Francisco from Sand Hill Road in Palo Alto.

In fact, that's a common pattern over the last half century: high-tech regions don't sprout in diverse cities but way out in the suburbs. Think of Route 128 outside of Boston, the Dulles Corridor in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., the two Silicon Prairies west of Chicago and north of Dallas, or the biotech office parks next to Torrey Pines golf course in scenic North San Diego

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county. These high-tech havens are diverse in the sense that they are full of both white and Asian whiz kids. But that's not what "diversity" means today.

Bohemians don't invent gizmos. Nerds do. The geeks and the golf-playing sales guys who peddle their inventions are usually team players who are relatively monogamous and family-oriented. They soon wind up in the burbs, where they find backyards and good public schools.

Dr. Vibrant is also making the classic mistake of confusing current reality with historic causation. He has the arrow of causality pointing backwards. His foot-loose favorites are more likely to follow the money generated by the pocket-protector boys than they are to produce it. His kind of people don't create wealth; they show the wives of affluent men fashionable ways to spend it.

For example, in the 1970s, Houston suddenly became one of the gayest cities in America, even though Space City was not famously broadminded. But homosexuals, along with immigrants and *artistes*, flocked there because OPEC had raised prices, making Houston's unhip oil companies rich for a decade. In contrast, Houston's traditionally tolerant neighbor, New Orleans, was an economic basket case long before Hurricane Katrina.

Even Silicon Valley's social history does not exactly fit Dr. Vibrant's thesis. Are we supposed to believe that William Shockley, who launched the first semiconductor company in 1956 and later became a notorious eugenics advocate, was the epitome of tolerance?

Tom Wolfe wrote about Silicon Valley's Protestant cultural roots in "The Tinkerings of Robert Noyce," an 18,000-word article for the 50th anniversary edition of *Esquire* in December 1983. Noyce, known as the "Mayor of Silicon Valley" because he was the co-inventor of the integrated circuit and co-founder of Intel, grew up as the son of a Congregationalist minister in Grinnell, Iowa—a fairly representative background for Silicon Valley's early titans. Wolfe exclaimed in summation:

What a treasure, indeed, was the moral capital of the nineteenth century! Noyce happened to grow up in a family in which the long-forgotten light of Dissenting Protestantism still burned brightly. ... Ironically, it was that long-forgotten light ... from out of the churchy, blue-nosed sticks ... that led the world into the twenty-first century ...

Clearly, universities are important in spawning tech centers. Yet the San Francisco Bay Area's technopolis didn't grow up around UC Berkeley, as Dr. Vibrant's theory would predict, but Stanford, the school for smart rich kids way off in the orchard-filled Santa Clara Valley.

None of this answers the question: where should you live? I can't answer that, but I can say that the central issue, which largely eludes Dr. Vibrant (who is married but has no kids), is the perceived conflict between finding a spouse and raising a family. The largest concentrations of eligible singles crowd together in expensive cities where only the richest can afford to raise children. The abundance of choice for singletons can mean decades squandered dithering, as "Seinfeld," "Friends," and "Bridget Jones's Diary" pointed out.

The average white woman living in Washington D.C., for example, gives birth at a rate that adds up to only 1.1 babies per lifetime, barely half the replacement rate of 2.1. Furthermore, environmentalist restrictions on urban development have made houses with a yard in "creative" cities increasingly unaffordable for families. As the headline of a 2005 *New York Times* article about Portland noted, "Vibrant Cities Find One Thing Missing: Children." At times in *Who's Your City?* even Dr. Vibrant appears to be on the verge of noticing that creative cities are demographically not, as they like to say in Portland, "sustainable." ■

Steve Sailer is TAC's film critic and also writes for VDARE.com and iSteve.blogspot.com.

POETRY

The Taste of Vine and Verse

By Abigail Palmer

VISITORS TO THE NAPA VALLEY will find, inscribed on the signs at either end of Highway 29, Robert Louis Stevenson's memorable line: "...and the wine is bottled poetry." It's taken from *The Silverado Squatters*, Stevenson's insightful and detailed account of living in the wine country of the Wild West.

Yet the connection between wine and poetry goes much farther back. Homer praised wine, as did other Greek poets and playwrights. In fact, writers of all genres seem to have found inspiration under Bacchus's tutelage. Aristophanes made fun of Cratinus, a fellow playwright and self-professed wine enthusiast, saying that he had died of shock from seeing his wine go to waste as it ran from a broken amphora. (An amphora approximates a 15-liter bottle in volume, so who among us who would not die even a little upon witnessing such a loss?)

But back to poetry in particular. The Roman satirist Horace understood well the parallels between *vinum* and verse: both are for enjoyment in the here and now, both civilize us and enliven the time we have together. In Ode I.37, Horace describes a particularly joyful scene:

Now is the time for drinking,
Now we must beat the ground
with dancing feet,
Already now we should have
adorned couches
For the feasts of the Salii, my
friends.
Before it was forbidden
To bring forth Caecuban wine
from our ancestral cellars...

I've taken some of the bite out of the first line: the Latin is more compelling—*nunc est bibendum*, "now we must

drink." If that exhortation sounds more fitting to a fraternity party than wine and cheese with the swells, take comfort in the fact that Horace is not describing a scene of excess but of celebration. In fact, later in the ode, he describes the defeated Cleopatra as being drunk from a cloying variety of Egyptian wine and suggests that drunkenness had something to do with her undoing. Caecuban wine, on the other hand, is the good stuff.

Unlike a statue or a painting, wine and poetry both have an easily determined beginning and end, reminding us of the shortness of time. Poetry in Horace's age still retained its oral tradition, and though a few coffeehouses still host spoken verse, the majority of us relegate poets to bookshelves. But in antiquity, few could afford to own editions of poems to refer to at their leisure. Once the last words were uttered, the poem was gone. But was it lost entirely? In addition to enriching many a feast, recited poetry sent guests home with pleasant feelings and images lingering in their minds.

We can say the same for wine—or can even say that it is more ephemeral than our modern printed poetry. Have you tried to explain a wonderful wine to a friend who had the misfortune of not drinking it with you? You can recall the color, aromas, and mouthfeel, but words cannot equal the experience.

Horace knew this frustration, but he took the bittersweet nature of time's passing and presented his reader (or listener) with one moral: enjoy the days you have. The pithy Ode I.11 sums up his message:

Do not seek—it is forbidden to
know—what end
The gods have given to you, to me,
Leuconoe,
Nor should you try astrology.
How much better to endure
Whatever will be,
Whether Jupiter has allotted many
winters
Or the last, which now weakens
The waves of the Tyrrhenian Sea,
with opposing rocks.
Be wise, strain your wine, and
since time is short

Prune back long hope; while we
are speaking,
Greedy time will have already fled:
seize the day, trusting very little
in the future.

That ode that I've translated is the source for the oft-quoted *carpe diem*, and one need not be an Epicurean to see why the motto is still popular. While in Horace's time it was often used to convince a girl to acquiesce to ardent ambitions, we now apply it to all sorts of undertakings: a new career, marathon training, taking a dream vacation.

Wine imagery is also present in Ode I.11. Wine was strained immediately before drinking, thus one should not, like Horace's miser in his *Satires*, keep it forever locked up in the cellar. Wisdom does not lie in hoarding a certain prized vintage; in fact, the miser's refusal to drink his wine is seen as a vain attempt at earthly immortality. Wisdom consists of enjoying wine in company, an act that recognizes that the bottle, like life, will pass away regardless of our efforts.

The marketing angle of wine as *memento mori* will probably not be embraced by the Napa Chamber of Commerce anytime soon. Regardless, one can still enjoy the mortal nature of wine, poetry, and company and rejoice in them.

Hilaire Belloc did just that. He does not spare his praise of wine—see any of his drinking lays, especially the one about Burgundian wine. Belloc was a Pinot Noir fan long before "Sideways" popularized the varietal. He exhorts imbibing, as Horace did, yet comes to some strikingly different conclusions. The centuries-long gap between him and Horace leads Belloc, at the end of his classically influenced "Heroic Poem in Praise of Wine," to see humanity's connection to wine as extending even past this life:

When from the waste of such long
labour done
I too must leave the grape-
ennobling sun
And like the vineyard worker take
my way
Down the long shadows of

declining day,
Bend on the sombre plain my
clouded sight
And leave the mountain to the
advancing night,
Come to the term of all that was
mine own
With nothingness before me, and
alone;
Then to what hope of answer shall
I turn?
Comrade-Commander whom I
dared not earn,
What said You then to trembling
friends and few?
'A moment, and I drink it with you
new:
But in my Father's Kingdom.' So,
my Friend,
Let not Your cup desert me in the
end.
But when the hour of mine adven-
ture's near
Just and benignant, let my youth
appear
Bearing a Chalice, open, golden,
wide,
With benediction graven on its side.
So touch my dying lip: so bridge
that deep:
So pledge my waking from the gift
of sleep,
And, sacramental, raise me the
Divine:
Strong brother in God and last
companion, Wine.

If we take Belloc's words as benediction, then our joy is not nearly as terminal as we might have first thought. That quietly pastoral image of the vineyard worker making his way down the row as the sun sets behind the mountains, a typical scene for anyone in wine country, suggests a completion but not an end.

So let us embrace this life, prune back the vines, and leave in the twilight, with our work done. Why keep the choice vintage for an undetermined, shadowy day in the future? *Nunc est bibendum*. Now we must drink. Let us do it together. ■

Abigail Palmer lives in St. Helena, California and works at a winery.

My Walden

When I ponder our curiously unbalanced civilization, able to put golf carts on Mars but unable to equal the verse of muddy Elizabethan London, I wonder why we

are as we are. In all things technological, the United States is magnificent, the Athens of transistors. Yet the symphonies die unlistened to, we have no Shakespeare or Dante nor notion why we might want them, and religious expression grows mute or crabbed and hostile. Why?

I think the answer is that our surroundings determine not just what we think, but what we can think. We live in cities urban but not urbane, among screaming sirens, air grayed by exhaust and the blattings of buses. The complaint is not invalid for being trite. I cannot imagine a Whitman composing in a shopping mall.

The rush and complexity of everything take their toll. As a people we might well be called the Unrelaxed and, therefore, the Uncontemplative.

Other lives are possible, or were possible. Years ago, I passed a summer in Hampden-Sydney, my small college on a huge wooded campus in then rural Virginia. The students were blessedly gone.

Along the Via Sacra, as the only road on campus was called, under blue skies going on forever and forever, there was silence, absolute silence, unless you count the twittering of birds and the keening of bugs in ancient oaks. These may be sounds, but they are not noise. They are not even music, but something before, older, earlier, better. Vivaldi was a great man, but here he was out of his league. The professors' houses, dignified but not pretentious, watched from yards shaded by old trees. It was quiet and warm, and you were with your thoughts.

It was terribly unmodern. At night the stars shone in the black infinite and there was no noise. No noise. There a Thoreau could have written or a Corot painted. I do not think this possible in clangorous suburban ugliness.

Following the Via Sacra, you came to Black Bottom, where the road ended in woods and there was a pond with a swan in it. The place was not the stuff of photographic magazines, just the quiet, bug-loud second growth of Virginia. In a lengthening life, I have seen nothing more peaceful. To the left, a trail of red clay, speckled with mica, wound through the pines down and down to Slippery Rock. Deep in the woods, a

Such places change one's inner world. At Slippery Rock, I thought things I could not in Arlington, Virginia, just outside of Washington, with its sirens and traffic and quietly angry people connected to iPods. Wilson Boulevard, where I lived, was by no means horrible. I liked its restaurants and bars and sushi joints. The people weren't evil. But it was terribly unquiet.

I am not religious, at least in the sense of believing that I have the answers, but I am religious in the sense of knowing the questions. I know that there are things we can't know, things even more important than making partner before the age of 30. Doubtless most of us know this. Yet the tenor of life is not easily escaped. We try. People rush to Europe in search of the old, the quiet, and the pretty. Peddlers of real estate understand the urge, and hawk tranquil rural life while building the

AS A PEOPLE WE MIGHT WELL BE CALLED **THE UNRELAXED** AND, THEREFORE, **THE UNCONTEMPLATIVE.**

small stream splashed through the red banks and slid over a flat rock covered with moss. Few knew of it. My father, before there was electricity, came here to slide into the pool below. As did I.

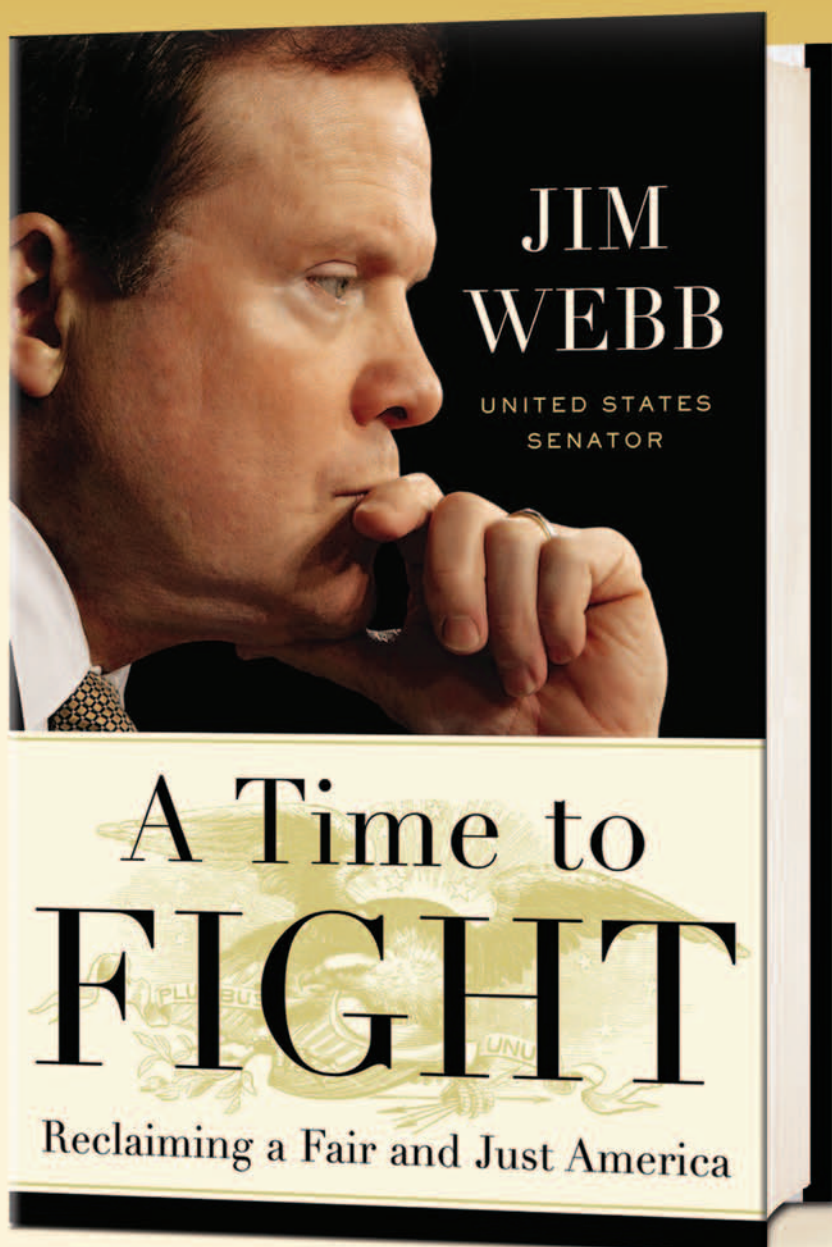
On many afternoons, I read there, or did nothing, or watched the water striders skating on the surface, their feet in little depressions in the water. Being then a student of physics and chemistry, I knew somewhat of surface tension and surfactants and the preferences of hydrogen bonds, but I also knew I was looking at something beyond my comprehension. It was not a scientific observation. Scientists take things apart but, except for the greats, do not notice the whole. The greats are few on the ground.

malls that will make it impossible. And so hurry comes to Arcadia. People then think of escape to the next small town. We spend a remarkable amount of time fleeing ourselves. Maybe instead we should build a place we like.

Few precisely like what we have, I suppose, but how does one escape it? In noise-ridden cities smelling of exhaust, where the stars languish obscured by smoke, the rivers run semi-poisonous, and much of the populace can barely read, how can anyone think beyond the stock market and the next empty copulation? The Milnes and Donnes and Marlowes don't exist because they can't, and we don't want them because we can't want them. ■

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